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**THESIS**

**INTERNET RADICALIZATION: ACTUAL THREAT OR  
PHANTOM MENACE?**

by

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September 2012

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**INTERNET RADICALIZATION:  
ACTUAL THREAT OR PHANTOM MENACE?**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Popular opinion expresses fear that accessing radical Islamic content and connecting with extremist networks through Internet functionalities causes radicalization and recruitment to commit terrorist acts. Anecdotal evidence has been used to support this assertion. The opinion assumes the Internet creates a new path that drives radicalization and recruitment. Whether computer-mediated communication (CMC) and Internet functionalities cause individuals to radicalize has not been thoroughly studied. This thesis explores whether a correlation can be found to attribute radicalization to radicalizing content and extremist networks accessed through CMC and Internet functionalities. A framework is used to evaluate vulnerabilities identified by the psychological, sociological and social-psychological elements of radicalization against the radicalization process, personal history, and the presence of radicalizing conventional communication and extremist contact. The analysis finds three cases that may support a conclusion that Internet radicalization is possible; however, the importance of root causes and individual vulnerabilities may have a greater impact. Since some circumstances involving CMC may increase the likelihood of radicalization, the fear of Internet radicalization may be reasonable, but the number of incidents validating that fear makes the threat unlikely, and appears more as a phantom menace than a real threat.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CMC	Computer-mediated communication
EU	European Union
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
ISD	Institute for Strategic Dialogue
NYPD	New York Police Department
UK	United Kingdom
U.S.	United States

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. OVERVIEW

A long, long time ago in a distant cave where modern Internet technology allowed jihadists to communicate persuasive calls to embrace the dark side and fight opposing worldviews with violence, Abu Musa al-Zawahiri constructed a strategy to leverage computer-mediated communication to radicalize and recruit the umma for war against non-Muslims, apostates and unfaithful Muslims.<sup>1</sup> The ubiquity of the modern Internet has made global connectivity and the polished production and unfiltered delivery of extremist information a source of concern that individuals encountering extremist material and networks will radicalize and join the violent jihad. This thesis examines whether Internet radicalization is an actual threat to homeland security, or if it is merely a phantom menace cloaking the real drivers of radicalization and recruitment.

This thesis reviews current opinions about the fear of Internet radicalization, the causes and processes of radicalization, and creates a framework to evaluate cases that were considered as examples of Internet radicalization and recruitment. Analysis through the framework determines that of nine cases examined—only three have a significant correlation between radicalization and computer-mediated communication. Root causes and individual vulnerabilities play a substantial role in all nine cases and in several of sixteen additional cases summarized in the Appendix. Therefore, attention to root causes and vulnerabilities may be more productive than addressing the perilous area of intervening in Internet content and communication. The final section identifies recommendations for study and research to better understand the dynamics between radicalization and computer-mediated communication.

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<sup>1</sup> Marc Lynch, “Al-Qaeda’s Media Strategies,” *The National Interest*, no. 83 (2006): 50–56.

## **B. INTERNET PLUS RADICALIZATION ASSUMES “INTERNET RADICALIZATION”**

Radical Islamic extremists publish documents, music and videos through the Internet to deliver extremist ideology and religious doctrine to populations beyond the group’s direct physical contact. Direct communication via email, video conferencing and social media close the physical gap between the extremists and distant targets. Internet connectivity creates a new “smaller world” or virtual community where actual physical proximity between radicalizer and recruit may no longer be necessary. A radical cleric in an overseas mosque, recruiting and cultivating terrorists, can now build relationships with United States residents, influencing not only their ideology, but also directing their conduct.<sup>2</sup> Anwar al-Awlaki, who was in Yemen, reportedly had email contact with Major Nidal Hasan prior to Hasan murdering thirteen people at Fort Hood, Texas.<sup>3</sup> Al-Awlaki’s influence is said to have contributed to Hasan’s actions.<sup>4</sup> Al-Awlaki’s influence and inspiration from afar is also evidenced by the radicalization of Zachary Chessler, who pleaded guilty to federal charges associated with terrorist activity.<sup>5</sup> Chessler engaged al-Awlaki in dialogue and created his own Internet presence to communicate Islamic extremism.

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<sup>2</sup> Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 116.

<sup>3</sup> Brian Ross and Rhonda Schwartz, “Major Hasan’s E-Mail: ‘I Can’t Wait to Join You’ in Afterlife,” *abcnews.go.com*, November 19, 2009, <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/major-hasans-mail-wait-join-afterlife/story?id=9130339#.T28z6XjnsfM>.

<sup>4</sup> Mariano Castillo, “American-born Radical Cleric Understood the West,” September 30, 2011, *cnn.com*, [http://articles.cnn.com/2011-09-30/middleeast/world\\_meast\\_yemen-al-awlaki-profile\\_1\\_anwar-al-awlaki-qaeda-key-al?\\_s=PM:MIDDLEEAST](http://articles.cnn.com/2011-09-30/middleeast/world_meast_yemen-al-awlaki-profile_1_anwar-al-awlaki-qaeda-key-al?_s=PM:MIDDLEEAST).

<sup>5</sup> Sen. Comm. on Homeland Security and Gov. Affairs., *Zachary Chessler: A Case Study in Online Islamist Radicalization and Its Meaning for the Threat of Homegrown Terrorism*, Washington D.C.: February 2012.

The perceived threat of Internet published radicalizing propaganda has been presented in Congressional hearings<sup>6</sup>, academic publications<sup>7</sup> and news reports.<sup>8</sup> The *National Strategy for Counterterrorism* recognizes the impact of radicalization and identifies the importance of taking action against al-Qaeda radicalization and recruitment.<sup>9</sup> There is a knowledge gap in understanding the actual impact of radicalization efforts utilizing computer-mediated communication such as Internet websites, email, blogs and social networking applications. President Obama's *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* identifies this gap, and calls for research and analysis to understand the “role of the Internet in radicalization to violence.”<sup>10</sup>

The opinion that the Internet presents a significant radicalization threat appears to be based on an assumption that radicalization results from the increased availability and easy access to extremist information tailored to persuade the viewer to embrace the “dark side.”<sup>11</sup> To support their position, advocates usually provide anecdotes about individuals who have engaged in terrorist activity and were known to use the Internet to view material containing radical ideology, terrorist training and instruction, or participate in social networking sites where people engage in radical discourse. The anecdotes provide a logical association between the Internet and radicalization and terrorist action, but the logical link is weak because it assumes, rather than examines, the existence of causation.

Causation logic requires affirmatively stating, “but-for” the individual’s encounter with Internet-accessible material, the individual would not have been radicalized or

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<sup>6</sup> *Oversight of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Before the House Comm. On the Judiciary*, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong. (March 16, 2011) (statement of Robert S. Mueller III, Director Federal Bureau of Investigation).

<sup>7</sup> Tim Stevens and Peter R. Neumann, “Countering Online Radicalisation: A Strategy for Action,” International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, January 2009, <http://icsr.info/news/attachments/1236768445ICSROnlineRadicalisationReport.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon Lubold, “Internet Aids Terrorist Recruiting, Pentagon Says,” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 10, 2010, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2010/0310/Internet-aids-terrorist-recruiting-radicalization-Pentagon-says>.

<sup>9</sup> The White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, Washington, DC: June 2011, 9–10.

<sup>10</sup> The White House, *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*, Washington, DC: December 2011, 13.

<sup>11</sup> “Dark side” is a euphemism used to describe a group with ideology that is outside the mainstream point of view and perceived as evil. The term was used in the “Star Wars” movie series to denote the evil ideology that the warriors for the good ideology sought to overthrow.

engaged in a terrorist atrocity. Internet causation should not be assumed without studying radicalization causes and processes, and determining the role computer-mediated communication may play to generate, magnify, or accelerate radicalization and terrorist conduct. Causation cannot simply be attributed because it is a feasible conclusion. In other words, unless the dynamics between radicalization and the role the Internet plays in the radicalization process is better understood, an assertion that Internet radicalization exists cannot be assumed.

The problem space of this thesis is discovering a method to attribute radicalization to computer-mediated communication that is better than mere recitation of anecdotal evidence. Psychological, social and political studies have been made to analyze the radicalization process.<sup>12</sup> The understanding gained from such studies assists in identifying vulnerabilities where individuals are most susceptible to Internet-facilitated propaganda and virtual social contact with extremists. A supportable causation argument can be developed when information discloses that computer-mediated communication played a substantial part in catalyzing a radical change from a conventional worldview to an extremist worldview. A valid causation argument will support the contention that Internet radicalization is a real threat, and will assist in determining proper countermeasures to reduce the threat. Understanding the actual nature of the Internet threat would also enable policy makers to adjust any national policy distortions and focus counterterrorism resources where most appropriate.

### C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does content provided through computer-mediated communication (CMC) create a distinct threat of radicalization, referred to as Internet radicalization?
2. Can a framework be constructed to evaluate whether computer-mediated communication played a substantial role in radicalization?

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<sup>12</sup> Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Laura Grossman, *Homegrown Terrorists in the U.S. and U.K.: An Empirical Examination of the Radicalization Process* (FDD Press, Washington, DC, April 2009).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNET ON RADICALIZATION, RECRUITMENT AND TERRORISM

The Internet has made it easier to find people and create global networks among like-minded individuals, and it has “lowered the threshold for engaging in ‘risky’ or ‘embarrassing’ behaviour because users can interact anonymously.”<sup>13</sup> Terrorists use Internet functionalities as a tool for radicalization, recruitment, propaganda distribution, communication and training.<sup>14</sup> Inspiring potential operatives through Internet propaganda implements Al Qaeda’s combat strategy to use the media as a battlefield.<sup>15</sup>

Al Qaeda members Anwar Al-Awlaki and Samir Kahn have used the Internet to influence and motivate people to violent jihad through their electronic magazine *Inspire*, extensive Internet presence, and personal email correspondence to followers.<sup>16</sup> The impact of Islamic radicalization of United States citizens through the Internet has been discussed in news articles and papers.<sup>17</sup> In a hearing before the House Judicial Committee, FBI Director Robert S. Mueller recognized the increasing use of the Internet to spread extremist propaganda and the unlimited access people like Al-Awlaki gain from the global Internet.<sup>18</sup>

In May 2006, Dr. Bruce Hoffman testified before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, acknowledged the technical sophistication of Al Qaeda and recognized that the new media tools created by the Internet have evolved the art of

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13 Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “Radicalisation: The Role of the Internet,” Policy Planners Network, Working paper of the PPN, June 2011,  
[http://www.strategicdialogue.org/StockholmPPN2011\\_BackgroundPaper\\_FOR%20WEBSITE.pdf](http://www.strategicdialogue.org/StockholmPPN2011_BackgroundPaper_FOR%20WEBSITE.pdf).

14 U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Terrorist Use of the Internet: Information Operations in Cyberspace*, by Catherine A. Theohary and John Rollins, CRS Report R41674 (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional Information and Publishing, March 8, 2011), 2.

15 Ibid.

16 Times Topics: Anwar Al-Awlaki, *NYTimes.com*, last modified July 18, 2012,  
[http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/a/anwar\\_al\\_awlaki/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/a/anwar_al_awlaki/index.html).

17 Lubold, “Internet Aids Terrorist Recruiting.”

18 *Oversight of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Before the House Comm. On the Judiciary*, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong. (March 16, 2011) (statement of Robert S. Mueller, III, Director Federal Bureau of Investigation).

terrorist communication “to a point where the terrorists themselves can now control the entire production process: determining the content, context and medium over which their message is projected; and towards precisely the audience (or multiple audiences) they seek to reach.”<sup>19</sup> This new expertise enables terrorists to present persuasive communications for fundraising, recruitment, training and instruction, operational planning, and propaganda and inspiration.<sup>20</sup> The ability to construct well-designed messages and distribute them throughout the world via the Internet gives terrorists and extremists global communication capabilities to engage and influence recipients far more effectively than in the past. CMC provides the terrorists tools to engage in a top-down strategy to influence would-be jihadists.

Dr. Hoffman again reviewed the impact of the Internet on terrorism in May 2011 during a House of Representatives subcommittee hearing on Internet terror recruitment when he cited the Internet playing a common role in radicalization and terrorist plots of New York subway bomb plotter Najibullah Zazi; Major Fort Hood shooter Nidal Hasan; Little Rock, Arkansas, recruitment station shooter Carlos Bledsoe; and the Minnesota Somali youths seeking to join jihad in Somalia.<sup>21</sup> In the same Congressional subcommittee hearing Brian Michael Jenkins, Senior Advisor of the RAND Corporation, identified the power of the Internet stating, “Many homegrown terrorists begin their journey to violent jihad on the internet. It is accessible to seekers, reinforcing and channeling their anger, it creates on-line communities of like-minded extremists, it facilitates clandestine communications.”<sup>22</sup>

After finding a spike in terrorist activity in 2009, Jenkins points out the dramatic increase of jihadist websites and chat rooms, and attributes the Internet as a key factor in

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<sup>19</sup> *The Use of the Internet by Islamic Extremists, Before the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, U.S. House of Representatives*, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong. (May 4, 2006) (Testimony Bruce Hoffman), RAND Testimony Series (Santa Monica, CA, RAND Corporation: 2006) 1, [www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/2006/RAND\\_CT262-1.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/2006/RAND_CT262-1.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>21</sup> *Internet Terror Recruitment and Tradecraft: How Can We Address An Evolving Tool While Protecting Free Speech? Before the Subcom. on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment*, 111<sup>th</sup> Cong. (May 26, 2010) Serial No. 111–67 (Statement of Dr. Bruce Hoffman): 10.

<sup>22</sup> *Internet Terror Recruitment and Tradecraft: How Can We Address An Evolving Tool While Protecting Free Speech?* (Statement of Brian Michael Jenkins), 15.

the terrorism spike.<sup>23</sup> He states, “...would-be jihadists can readily find resonance and reinforcement of their own complaints, as well as other jihadists who are only too eager to encourage and focus their anger.”<sup>24</sup> In both his Congressional statement and a subsequent study, Jenkins does not specifically mention radicalization of vulnerable individuals, but acknowledges Internet functionalities enhance networking for discontented individuals. It is not clear whether he implies CMC enables and encourages already radicalized individuals to terrorism recruitment—or progresses vulnerable individuals from mere discontent to radical extremism. This distinction is significant in that the former characterizes the Internet as an efficient means for connecting the radicalized into a functioning network and the latter characterizes CMC as inspiring a person to radicalize. The connectivity and network created by the Internet applies to both, but the content becomes more significant in radicalization.

Information to incite discontented people may be easily found on global television, radio and print news sources. The same information in a small group environment has been found to be critical to the process of conversion to radicalism.<sup>25</sup> The criticality comes from the tone of the group interaction set by the communicated message.<sup>26</sup> The unique global social network functionality of the Internet may facilitate group formation analogous to the small group radicalization and deliver the tone-setting message. The Internet facilitates group formation and message delivery, but characterizing this function as “Internet radicalization” may overstate the nexus between the message delivery and the impact of the message and group dynamic. As pointed out in a study on communication technology and interpersonal relations, “Virtual groups

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23 Brian Michael Jenkins, *Would-Be Warriors: Incidents of Jihadist Terrorist Radicalization in the United States Since September 11, 2001* (Santa Monica, CA, RAND Corporation: 2010) viii, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional\\_papers/2010/RAND\\_OP292.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2010/RAND_OP292.pdf).

24 Jenkins, “Would-Be Warriors,” viii.

25 Frank Hairgrove and Douglass M. McLeod, “Circles Drawing Toward High Risk Activism: The Use of *Usroh* and *Halaqa* in Islamist Radical Movements,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31 (2008): 406.

26 Ibid.

existed before the advent of the personal computer. Groups worked together using written text, telephone, and television technologies to create gathering point.”<sup>27</sup> Hence, the attribution of unique power may be overstated.

As recognized experts, Jenkins and Hoffman carry significant weight in asserting the Internet significantly influences vulnerable recipients to radicalize or commit terrorist acts. Internet functionalities enabling polished media productions and advanced communication systems, with extensive distribution ability, project an image of a sophisticated, all-reaching threat able to radicalize and recruit around the globe. This perception appears logical, but the power of Internet functionalities may not be as effective as commonly understood. The new Internet apparatus for distributing refined extremist content may be impressive, but the reception may be no more effective than traditional methods for passing on the same messages.

An Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) paper entitled, “Radicalisation: The Role of the Internet” identifies a concern that the Internet allows people to self-radicalize and act as lone-wolf terrorists.<sup>28</sup> The paper found the Internet can intensify and accelerate radicalization, but comes short of explicitly stating the Internet material causes radicalization.<sup>29</sup> The easy ability to confirm existing beliefs with Internet-provided videos and images is cited as “powerful sparks” to accelerate and intensify radicalization.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, the paper finds less evidence about the role of the Internet in recruiting violent activity.<sup>31</sup> On this point, the paper presents the importance of offline contacts and real-world relationships in the radicalization process.<sup>32</sup> Studies

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<sup>27</sup> John A. McArthur, “Mediated Group Development,” in *Interpersonal Relations and Social Patterns in Communication Technologies: Discourse Norms, Language Structures and Cultural Variables*, ed. Jung-ran Park and Eileen Abels (Vancouver, IG Global: 2010) 294, doi: 10.4018/978-1-61520-827-2.ch016.

<sup>28</sup> Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “Radicalisation: The Role of the Internet,” 2.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “Radicalisation: The Role of the Internet,” 3.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

regarding the impact of social networks on individual conduct and group association, particularly the work of Marc Sageman, are cited to support this point.<sup>33</sup>

The ISD paper illustrates the common incoherent picture of the Internet threat. The homeland security threat of Internet radicalization is not whether a person accepts extremist beliefs presented, but whether terrorist violence results in or is caused by the radicalization attributed to Internet-published extremist content. In this report, a person accessing the Internet for extremist-created content and committing an act of terrorism results in an implication that evidence exists to claim the former causes the latter. Despite stating the Internet material “sparks,” “accelerates” and “intensifies,” radicalization, the assumption presented is that radicalization has occurred, radicalization more likely than not would not have occurred but for the impact of the Internet content, radicalization caused the violence, and therefore the violent activity is most likely caused by accessing the objectionable Internet content. The causes of radicalization are highly debated and not settled;<sup>34</sup> therefore, attributing the communication medium as a cause of radicalization may not be rational, but merely convenient. Is the threat the Internet, the people behind the Internet content, or ultimately the terrorist conduct? The threat must be defined in terms of an individual’s action rather than the method the individual uses to access material to justify, inspire or instruct a particular worldview. The “threat of Internet radicalization” combines mechanisms of communication, radicalization and feared terrorist conduct.

Akil N. Awan of the University of London questions whether actual Internet radicalization occurs. He acknowledges that jihadist groups know and desire to exploit the radicalizing potential of the Internet.<sup>35</sup> However, Awan identifies that actual radicalization is difficult to ascertain, and finds that much of the material is propaganda aimed at indoctrination. He characterizes jihadist group efforts as a recruitment drive

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33 Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “Radicalisation: The Role of the Internet,” 3.

34 Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, *Studying Violent Radicalization in Europe II: The Potential Contribution of Socio-psychological and Psychological Approaches* (Copenhagen, Danish Institute for International Studies: March 2008), <http://www.diis.dk/sw49735.asp>.

35 Akil N. Awan, “Radicalization on the Internet? The Virtual Propagation of Jihadist Media and its Effects,” *RUSI Journal* 152, no. 3 (2007): 78.  
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/212131640?accountid=12702>.

through Internet propaganda rather than radicalization.<sup>36</sup> Despite distinguishing recruitment from radicalization, Awan identifies the 2004 Madrid train bombings as an example of radicalization through Internet recruitment. He cites the Internet call for bombing trains in Spain to compel withdrawal from Iraq as evidence of this.<sup>37</sup> In further examples, Awan points out that jihadist groups used the Internet as an information tool and for training material, but the illustrations show no clear link to the radicalization process other than access to information. Awan recognizes this problem. He describes a Canadian “home-grown” bomb plot discovered through monitoring an Internet chat room and states, “Yet even in such cases, where the use of Internet communication appears as *prima facie* evidence of its role in radicalization, in fact the Internet only seems to have provided the initial impetus: the plot quickly became more conventional in terms of planning and actualization after the group meetings at a ‘training camp’ in Northern Ontario.”<sup>38</sup> His example shows recruitment for violent action rather than facilitating the radicalization process. The illustration seems to blur the question of whether the threat is Internet recruitment or Internet radicalization.

Despite citing the fact that the terrorist actors or radicalized individuals utilize Internet communications, the literature reviewed so far has not found a clear assertion of cause and effect where the Internet contact or communication is the cause of the radicalization or terrorist action. Maura Conway and Lisa McInerney have studied jihadi-promoting YouTube videos to seek evidence supporting the potential for online radicalization.<sup>39</sup> The study found one particular individual who “went from browsing a generic website to suddenly being integrated into a specific network by virtue of a single posted comment.”<sup>40</sup> Conway and McInerney did not claim with certainty that the individual was being radicalized, but claim the study gives evidence that there is

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36 Awan, “Radicalization on the Internet?” 3.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Maura Conway and Lisa McInerney, “Jihadi Video and Auto-radicalisation: Evidence from an Exploratory YouTube Study,” Paper presented at EuroISI 2008-First European Conference on Intelligence and Security Informatics, Esbjerg, Denmark, December 3–5, 2008.

40 Ibid., 115.

“potential for online radicalization of those with no apparent prior links to jihadists.”<sup>41</sup> Conway and McInerney acknowledged the conflict between Bruce Hoffman’s top-down hierarchical terrorist organization theory and Marc Sageman’s bottom-up network theory and posed that Hoffman’s view may account for online extremists targeting youths without prior interest in jihad and Sageman for youthful seekers consuming jihadist materials online.<sup>42</sup>

Sageman found that joining the jihad is a process of deciding to go somewhere for training, and then being formally recruited by other jihadis and finally joining the jihad.<sup>43</sup> Joining the jihad was found to be a bottom-up process rather than a top-down process where the new individual is recruited to join.<sup>44</sup> He further found that his study subjects experienced an “intensification of religious feelings and conversion to Salafi Islam took place in a strong social context.”<sup>45</sup> If the existence of relationships significantly impacts joining jihad, then a question to be explored is whether an individual accessing radicalizing material on the Internet can truly be radicalized to the point of violent jihad absent direct contact with a jihadi community to intensify faith, belief and personal learning. Internet radicalization in regard to self-radicalization and lone-wolf terrorism becomes suspect. The global social links created by the Internet may have greater and more significant impact than the radicalizing content, thus changing the perception of the term *Internet radicalization* from the threat of radicalizing content to the threat of radicalizing contacts.

Sageman found global jihadists linked to each other through a complex web of direct or mediated exchanges. Virtual networks created by Internet social applications are analogous.<sup>46</sup> In reconciling the lack of direct social bonds in the global jihad, Sageman

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41 Maura Conway and Lisa McInerney, “Jihadi Video and Auto-radicalisation: Evidence from an Exploratory YouTube Study,” Paper presented at EuroISI 2008-First European Conference on Intelligence and Security Informatics, Esbjerg, Denmark, December 3–5, 2008, 116.

42 Ibid., 117.

43 Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia: 2004), 91–92.

44 Ibid., 110.

45 Ibid., 119.

46 Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 137.

identified virtual bonds based on an abstraction—such as God and the umma—such that the global jihadist became a member of an imagined or virtual sectarian community.<sup>47</sup> Support for this contention can be found in a study on CMC impact on relational communication—communication for individuals in close relationships and interpersonal communication (communication among individuals connected by a similar topic or subject)—supports this and finds that CMC establishes an arena where people can be drawn together by affinity based on common interest rather than relationship.<sup>48</sup> This idea is a key to the possible effectiveness of the Internet to radicalize.

The abstract bonds, developed in the global jihad virtual community Sageman describes, form despite the lack of direct physical connection. Similarly, the web-surfer may develop a virtual community not connected to his actual life role, existence or social network, but develop an independent virtual social existence that fills the social bonds and intensification needed for radicalization.<sup>49</sup> The avatar becomes reality when the web-surfer acts pursuant to the leading, direction or fulfillment of the virtual social role.<sup>50</sup> The functionalities of the Internet facilitate broad network development where globalization may be the actual driving force to radicalization. Causation may come not from the tool, but from access to global dynamics that in the past would be unknown, delayed in reception, or insignificant due to topical ignorance.

From the literature examined, an assumption appears to be made that the new direct access to refined and tailored extremist information, and the enhanced ability to contact the global radical-extremist community, significantly facilitates either the process of radicalization, the success of recruitment or the ability to execute a terrorist plan. Radicalization seems to be attributed to the Internet due to the dynamics of the real-time

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<sup>47</sup> Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 149.

<sup>48</sup> Jessica L. Moore and Elizabeth A. Craig, “Relationship Development and Maintenance in a Mediated World,” in *Interpersonal Relations and Social Patterns in Communication Technologies: Discourse Norms, Language Structures and Cultural Variables*, ed. Jung-ran Park and Eileen Abels (Vancouver, IG Global: 2010), 81, doi: 10.4018/978-1-61520-827-2.ch005.

<sup>49</sup> Kai Sassenberg, “Common Bond and Common Identity Groups on the Internet: Attachment and Normative Behavior in On-Topic and Off-Topic Chats,” *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 6, no. 1 (2002): 28.

<sup>50</sup> McArthur, “Mediated Group Development,” in Park and Abels, *Interpersonal Relatoins and Social Patterns*, 296–297.

global communication network and objectionable content conveyed through the network. The Internet radicalization threat is not clearly articulated as coming from recruitment, radicalization or violent actions of radicalized individuals, but covered as a broad but paradoxically specific categorization of radicalization.

## B. RECRUITMENT AND RADICALIZATION

This thesis focuses on Internet radicalization and distinguishes radicalization from recruitment, but will reflect the context of “Internet radicalization and recruitment” where that term is used. While recruitment and radicalization are distinct, the literature has disclosed some interchangeability between the two terms. Recruitment to extremism and terrorism is the process of actively soliciting individuals to join an extremist movement or commit illegal acts on behalf of the movement.<sup>51</sup> Radicalization has been defined as “the phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism.”<sup>52</sup> Radicalization is distinguished from recruitment in that recruitment seeks to add members to a group or to solicit participation in conduct or activities. Radicalization requires acceptance of ideology, but not necessarily participation or membership in a group.

Literature distinguishes between radicalization and recruitment, and treats each as an element of terrorist violence.<sup>53</sup> There is commonality between recruitment and radicalization in regard to the focus population of each. Both target vulnerable individuals within a population for indoctrination to a worldview and/or action to promote that worldview.<sup>54</sup> Since the target and goals of recruitment and radicalization are consistent, the distinction between the two becomes cloudy when evaluating the role

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51 Dean C. Alexander, “Offline and Online Radicalization and Recruitment of Extremists and Terrorists,” *Journal of Homeland Security* (Western Illinois University Homeland Security Studies & Analysis Institute) (September 2010): 4.

52 Council of the European Union, “The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Evaluating EU Policies Concerning Causes of Radicalization,” November 30, 2005, 9, <http://www.transnationalterrorism.eu/tekst/publications/EU%20Counterradicalization%20Strategy.pdf>.

53 Alexander, “Offline and Online Radicalization and Recruitment,” 4.

54 *The Internet: A Portal to Violent Islamist Extremism, Before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Comm*, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong. (May 3, 2007) (Written Statement of Frank J. Cilluffo, Director of Homeland Security Policy Institute, George Washington University), 2.

of the Internet in both. Brian Michael Jenkins points out that the complete phrase, “radicalization and recruitment to terrorist violence,” is preferred by analysts because legal intervention can occur only when extremism turns to criminal incitement and violent action or manifest intent to engage in violence.”<sup>55</sup>

Radicalization can be categorized as cognitive radicalization and violent radicalization. Cognitive radicalization is the process where an individual refutes and replaces the legitimacy of an existing social order with ideas severely at odds with the mainstream.<sup>56</sup> Violent radicalization occurs when an individual takes violent action to “further the views derived from cognitive radicalism.”<sup>57</sup> Since cognitive radicalization is the gateway to violent radicalization, and since violent radicalization encompasses recruitment to violence, Internet radicalization will be reviewed in regard to cognitive radicalization to avoid confusion between recruitment and radicalization.

### C. RADICALIZATION CAUSES AND RADICALIZATION PROCESS

Internet radicalization cannot be justified as a legitimate concept if CMC does not have a substantial impact on the causes of radicalization or the radicalization process. Studies examining radicalization provide causation and process theories that can be used to analyze where and how the Internet functionalities and CMC have impact. Determining whether Internet radicalization exists requires reviewing radicalization theories to evaluate where in the radicalization models CMC may likely have radicalizing impact, be observed most often, or attributed to vulnerabilities.

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55 Brian Michael Jenkins, *Stray Dogs and Virtual Armies: Radicalization and Recruitment to Jihadist Terrorism in the United States Since 9/11* (Santa Monica, CA, RAND Corporation: 2011) vii., [http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional\\_papers/OP343](http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP343).

56 Lorenzo Vidino, “Countering Radicalization in America: Lessons from Europe,” *United States Institute of Peace Special Report* 262 (November 2010): 4, [http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR262%20-%20Countering\\_Radicalization\\_in\\_America.pdf](http://www.usip.org/files/resources/SR262%20-%20Countering_Radicalization_in_America.pdf).

57 Ibid.

## 1. Radicalization Causation

Multiple radicalization theories exist and include causes linked to structural factors, personal factors, social identity and economic deprivation.<sup>58</sup> <sup>59</sup> John Horgan states, “Given that so *many* people are exposed to the presumed generating conditions for terrorism (or “root causes”), the triggering factors and catalysts—or both for religious and political mobilization—that may lead to engagement in violent activity, why is it that so *few* people actually become recruited?”<sup>60</sup> (Italics in the original.) This same question can be asked when Internet radicalization and recruitment does exist: Why are so few people actually radicalized and recruited by the Internet? When analyzing the difference between Islamic terrorism in Europe and the U.S. and the role CMC plays, Sageman found that in the U.S. individuals “read and chat about global jihadi terrorist ideology on the Internet, just like their European counterparts. Yet for most American Muslims, the terrorist message does not become a catalyst to action as it does for their European counterparts, since it does not resonate with their beliefs or personal experiences.”<sup>61</sup> This point identifies that the cause of radicalization has its roots in social problems, and not in the mere fact that jihadi or radicalizing material is accessible on the Internet. Hence, root causes based in social, political, economic and religious issues must be associated and examined in conjunction with the free availability of radical Islamic content.

The European Union defines radicalization as “the phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas that could lead to acts of terrorism.”<sup>62</sup> A EU radicalization study has categorized radicalizing factors with three levels and linked the

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<sup>58</sup> Council of the European Union, “The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Evaluating EU Policies Concerning Causes of Radicalization,” November 30, 2005, 3, <http://www.transnationalterrorism.eu/tekst/publications/EU%20Counterradicalization%20Strategy.pdf>.

<sup>59</sup> Joshua Sinai, “Using the Internet to Uncover Terrorism’s Root Causes,” *Journal of Counterterrorism & Homeland Security International* 12, no. 4 (2006): 28–33.

<sup>60</sup> John Horgan, “From Profiles to Pathways: The Road to Recruitment,” *eJournal USA, Foreign Policy Agenda* 12, no. 5 (May 2007): 24–27, <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/0507/ijpe/horgan.htm>.

<sup>61</sup> Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 108.

<sup>62</sup> Council of the European Union, “The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Evaluating EU Policies Concerning Causes of Radicalization,” November 30, 2005, 9, <http://www.transnationalterrorism.eu/tekst/publications/EU%20Counterradicalization%20Strategy.pdf>.

levels to causes and catalysts.<sup>63</sup> The three levels are External, Social and Individual. External-level causes are linked to the political, economic and cultural conditions affecting the radicalized individual. Social-level causes include social identity, network dynamics and relative deprivation. Individual-level causes include psychological characteristics, personal experiences and rationality. Catalysts affect all three levels, and include recruitment efforts and triggering events such as a personal tragedy or a significant world event.<sup>64</sup> CMC and network functionalities can impact the Social-level causes and exploit Individual-level causes in the top-down model. Internet recruitment can be effective as a catalyst.

Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen summarized the socio-psychological and psychological approaches to violent radicalization and mobilization.<sup>65</sup> She categorizes these into three major schools: Sociological approaches, Individual-level approaches and Group Process approaches. Sociological approaches focus on how external factors impact individual and group behavior and the Individual-level approaches focus on psychological attributes. Dalgaard-Nielsen's Sociological approaches encompass the EU study External and Social levels. Individual-level approaches are consistent with the EU Individual level.<sup>66</sup> The Group Processes approach looks at "how certain social process can lead 'normal' people to do extraordinary things."<sup>67</sup> Group Process looks at "socialization, bonding and peer pressure within small groups nested within wider violent subcultures."<sup>68</sup> This approach parallels, but is narrower than the EU Social level. Group Process approach focuses on the processes involved in radicalization in terms of psychological rewards rather than psychological needs.<sup>69</sup> CMC and network functionalities can exploit areas within Group Processes in both the top-down and bottom-up frameworks: Top-down in regard to the

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<sup>63</sup> Council of the European Union, "Radicalisation, Recruitment and the EU Counter-radicalisation Strategy," Transnational Terrorism, Security & the Rule of Law," November 17, 2008, 10, <http://www.transnationalterrorism.eu/tekst/publications/WP4%20Del%207.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Studying Violent Radicalization in Europe II."

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 9–10.

group controls on the individual and bottom-up in regard to the network and virtual relationships facilitated by Internet social media components. Extremist groups recruit top-down through inspirational and informational web pages, blogs and discussion groups, which provide the vulnerable individual with a “personal role, a clear worldview and a righteous purpose.”<sup>70</sup> The recruiting group controls the rewards associated with membership, giving it the ability to exert pressure on the vulnerable individual to act in compliance with the group’s goals. Bottom-up group formation is facilitated by network communication capabilities such as email, text messaging, Internet relay chat rooms, video conferencing, and social applications such as Twitter and Facebook. These functionalities enable widely scattered people to find others with common interests, and coalesce them into virtual groups where group dynamics can influence individual and collective identity and conduct. John Horgan illustrates the commonality between these two approaches.

Horgan finds the “terrorist mind” is a product of “increased socialization into a terrorist movement and its associated engagement in illegal activity” and focused behavior relevant to the “context of a terrorist movement.”<sup>71</sup> The socialization process Horgan identifies can be found in both radicalization and recruitment when he states, “From a personal and social perspective, this often means that a socialization *into* terrorism, and those associated with it, sees a socialization *away from* nonrelevant friends, family, and the person’s former life.”<sup>72</sup> (Italics in original.) Socialization into terrorism supports the definition of recruitment. Socialization away from the conventional describes radicalization. Both involve Group Process socialization bond dynamics. The vital role the Internet plays in creating social bonds has been recognized in a Homeland Security Institute White Paper on Internet recruitment and radicalization of youths.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Dalgaard-Nielsen, “Studying Violent Radicalization in Europe II,” 10.

<sup>71</sup> Horgan, “From Profiles to Pathways,” 27.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Homeland Security Institute, “The Internet as a Terrorist Tool for Recruitment and Radicalization of Youth,” White Paper prepared for U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security, Science and Technology Directorate (Arlington, VA, Homeland Security Institute: April 24, 2009) 6, [http://www.homelandsecurity.org/docs/reports/Internet\\_Radicalization.pdf](http://www.homelandsecurity.org/docs/reports/Internet_Radicalization.pdf).

## **2. Radicalization Process**

In a New York Police Department radicalization case study, Silber and Bhatt found jihadist ideology as the motivator for radicalization and that the process moves through four phases: pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination and jihadization.<sup>74</sup> The case study recognizes the impact of the Internet on the individual and the driving motivation for radicalization as an “individual looking for an identity and a cause” that is often found in extremists Islam.<sup>75</sup> CMC and Internet functionalities create opportunities in each of the NYPD stages to instruct, socialize, indoctrinate and recruit, as described earlier.<sup>76</sup>

The FBI created a radicalization model similar to that of the NYPD. The FBI model has four stages: pre-radicalization, identification, indoctrination and action.<sup>77</sup> These categories are similar to NYPD, but the NYPD self-identification model ties more into joining a group and forming a new identity<sup>78</sup> rather than accepting a cause, as in the FBI model.<sup>79</sup>

Dr. Fathali Moghaddam constructed a “staircase to terrorism” model based on identity transformation, and global and social context to describe the psychological processes moving a person to engage in terrorism.<sup>80</sup> Moghaddam’s model consists of six metaphorical floors, including an all-inclusive ground floor, where the subject ascending each level encounters societal conditions that challenge the individual’s personal and collective identity and instigate a response to those conditions. Moghaddam identifies feelings of fairness and relative deprivation as a primary component of the ground

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<sup>74</sup> Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, “Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat,” New York Police Department (2007), 6–7.

<sup>75</sup> Silber and Bhatt, “Radicalization in the West,” 8.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 8–9.

<sup>77</sup> Carol Dyer, Ryan E McCoy, Joel Rodriguez and Donald N. Van Duyn, “Countering Violent Islamic Extremism: A Community Responsibility,” *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 76, no. 12 (December 2007), 3–9.

<sup>78</sup> Silber and Bhatt, “Radicalization in the West,” 30.

<sup>79</sup> Dyer et al., “Countering Violent Islamic Extremism,” 6.

<sup>80</sup> Fathali M. Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists’ Point of View: What They Experience and Why they Come to Destroy* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006).

floor;<sup>81</sup> on the first floor, the individual seeks opportunities for greater justice;<sup>82</sup> on the second floor, he begins identifying out-groups to blame for the perceived injustice and engages in displaced aggression;<sup>83</sup> progressing to the third floor, the individual identifies with the morality of the terrorists to justify violence to address the perceived injustice;<sup>84</sup> on the fourth floor, an adversarial “us-versus-them” view develops and the individual is recruited to join a terrorist organization;<sup>85</sup> and finally, on the fifth floor, the individual carries out the terrorist act.<sup>86</sup> For purposes of Internet radicalization assessment, the staircase model is useful in applying only the ground and first floor because these stages correlate with pre-radicalized conduct. The inclusive ground floor recognizes vulnerable individuals experiencing social and external causation elements that CMC enflame. The first floor describes knowledge seekers who may use Internet functionalities to learn about societal issues. Information conveyed by CMC regarding distant conflicts can instigate relative deprivation and encourage group identification in locations where conflicts and issues would not matter much but for global communication.<sup>87 88</sup> The second and subsequent floors associate with a radicalized individual developing deeper entrenchment in extremist ideology and activity.

In the *Leaderless Jihad*, Sageman presents a radicalization model similar to Moghaddam. Sageman focuses on circumstances affecting the Islamic community, the individual’s interpretation of the circumstances and reaction to the situation. He identifies four stages: moral outrage, war against Islam, resonance with personal experience and mobilized by networks.<sup>89</sup> The first two stages focus on the anger created by perceptions

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<sup>81</sup> Moghaddam, *From the Terrorist Point of View*, 45–47.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 59–60.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 71–78.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 84–85.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 97–99.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 113–114.

<sup>87</sup> Moghaddam, *From the Terrorist Point of View*, 22–23.

<sup>88</sup> Fathali M. Moghaddam, *How Globalization Spurs Terrorism* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2008), 49–51.

<sup>89</sup> Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 72–84.

of humiliation and injustice and need to respond to defend Islam.<sup>90</sup> Resonance with personal experience involves personally identifying with the perceived humiliation and injustice and developing resentment.<sup>91</sup> Mobilization involves recruitment and joining others who share the outrage, beliefs and experiences.<sup>92</sup>

Both Moghaddam and Sageman's models focus on the impact of perceptions that push an individual to radicalize and engage in terrorist conduct. Moghaddam's model seeks to understand the psychology of terrorism, and Sageman seeks to understand how terror networks are formed. The NYPD and FBI models recognize radicalization causes, but focus on identifying observable conduct indicating progress toward terrorism. Understanding Internet radicalization through the radicalization process and causation requires synthesizing a process timeline with objective indicators that can be attributed to the stage in the process. Sageman and Moghaddam's models focus on the impact of conditions on the individual; therefore, study of the impact of CMC requires discovering the direct impact on the CMC users. Direct contact with those engaged in CMC would be necessary, and cannot be studied in this thesis. The manifestations attributed to the stages in the law enforcement models provide examples of observable conduct, but lack the scholarly rigor to associate the conduct with root causes. A framework must be created to associate a law enforcement model with a model having observable indicators. The Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman study provides workable objective indicators.

Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman did an empirical study of 117 homegrown terrorists from the UK and U.S. to determine the path to radicalization.<sup>93</sup> The study disclosed six manifestations of the radicalization process: adopting a legalistic interpretation of Islam, trusting only select religious authorities, perceiving a schism between Islam and the West, low tolerance for perceived theological deviance, attempts to impose religious beliefs on others, and political radicalization.<sup>94</sup> CMC can provide

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<sup>90</sup> Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 72–80.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>93</sup> Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman, “Homegrown Terrorists in the U.S. and UK,” 27.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

tailored information to foster legalistic interpretations of Islam, promote the perceived schism between Islam and the West, and encourage political radicalization. These stages appear to be consistent outcomes within the social causation categories. The remaining three stages—trust, low tolerance and proselytization—reflect individual responses or dispositions that may or may not be manipulated with CMC. Each of these behaviors implies the move to radical thought when displayed. For example, email, blogs and chat rooms can facilitate access to a respected cleric across the sea, but the same functionalities cannot directly impart trust. Trust can be implied from two-way communication for advice and guidance, but the creation or origination of the trust cannot be easily determined. Objective evidence of trust helps identify the mindset of the individual, but not causation. In the same regard, CMC can be used as a proselytizing tool, and such use can help gauge the move to or the existence of a radical worldview. Intolerance may be articulated in CMC and also provides evidence of a worldview shift.

The correlation of causation, process and objective behaviors provides components to create a framework that may be utilized in evaluating Internet radicalization. Matching the NYPD model with the Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman behaviors provides a framework to evaluate radicalization staging. Further description of this synthesis is explained in the Findings section.

### **3. Self-Radicalization**

The concept of self-radicalization resulting from extremist-generated CMC appears throughout the literature. Self-radicalization is the theory that a person can consume radicalizing material and transform from a conventional worldview to a radical worldview without intervention by a third party.<sup>95</sup> Self-radicalized individuals have been characterized as “lone wolves.” CMC content provides information that in the past was delivered by traditional recruiters to actively radicalize targets.<sup>96</sup> A lone individual at a computer accessing radicalizing content, absorbing blog commentaries and participating

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<sup>95</sup> Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “Radicalisation: The Role of the Internet,” 2.

<sup>96</sup> Devin R. Springer, James L. Regens and David N. Edger, *Islamic Radicalism and Global Jihad*” (Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press: 2009), 138.

in chat rooms conjures an image of violent madness caused by the “cyber-inputs,” much like drug-induced delirium. As stated by research analyst Mohamed Abdul Saddiq, self-radicalizing through the Internet cast users “...as mindless automatons readily susceptible to the unparalleled horrors that the Internet seems to pose.”<sup>97</sup> The individual is robbed of self-control and succumbs to the morphine of ideas—self-induced at initiation, but involuntary once hooked. In correlation with this picture, juveniles have been identified at risk for self-radicalization through CMC due to the vulnerability of their age.<sup>98</sup>

Dr. Marc Sageman identifies how radicalization has transitioned from face-to-face interaction to online radicalization and recognizes self-radicalization as a product of self-recruitment. He stated to the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs that “recruitment is self-recruitment” and that “self-recruited upstarts do not need any outsiders to try to join the terrorist social movement.”<sup>99</sup> According to this view, the lurking web surfer self-connects bottom-up to terrorist networks and then self-radicalizes through exploration and participation. This viewpoint implies radicalization caused by seeker conduct and relationship dynamics rather than the existence of CMC and Internet functionalities. CMC facilitates the seeker’s entry to networks, provides answers to inquiries and assists progress through stages to radicalization. Radicalization through CMC and Internet functionalities is secondary and weakens a claim advancing self-radicalization. Entry to a network, whether virtual or real, removes the isolation necessary to claim self-radicalization.

David Tucker challenges aspects of Sageman’s claim that the interactivity of the Internet has changed relationships to facilitate radicalization and that websites do not

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<sup>97</sup> Mohamed Abdul Saddiq, “Whither e-jihad: Evaluating the Threat of Internet Radicalisation,” *RSIS Commentaries* (Singapore: Rajaratnam School of International Studies, July 27, 2010): 2, <http://hdl.handle.net/10220/6646>.

<sup>98</sup> Homeland Security Institute, “The Internet as a Terrorist Tool for Recruitment and Radicalization of Youth,” 1.

<sup>99</sup> S. Comm. On Homeland Security and Gov. Affairs, *Violent Islamist Extremism, the Internet, and the Homegrown Terrorist Threat* (Majority and Minority Staff Report) Washington, DC: May 8, 2008, 13. (From quote of Marc Sageman *Before the S. Comm. Homeland Security and Gov. Affairs hearing Violent Islamist Extremism: The European Experience*, June 27, 2007.)

drive extremist Islam.<sup>100</sup> Tucker questions the validity of Sageman's support for the impact of the Internet on relationships and Sageman's assertion that website content does not drive extremist Islam, since the seekers have already chosen to view the content to support their existing opinions.<sup>101</sup> Tucker cites the Colleen LaRose (Jihad Jane) case as an example of someone who radicalized through the Internet, and subsequently self-recruited and mobilized.<sup>102</sup> The LaRose case is analyzed as part of this thesis, and her individual vulnerability may have substantially contributed to her radicalization. Tucker's point, however, does highlight a "chicken and egg" issue regarding self-radicalization. Whether access to the network comes before radicalization or the opposite can help distinguish self-radicalization from recruitment. The network first favors relationship building and influence-establishing recruitment—whereas CMC provided information first and then network access may support self-radicalization. Accessing the network first supports Sageman's contention that the seeker has already embraced an extremist worldview. Information seeking first does not refute Sageman, but it leaves a question of inquiry motive. Information regarding why the person seeks extremist content can be innocent curiosity, or confirmation of ideology driven by root causes.

Brian Michael Jenkins examined lone-wolf terrorism and finds that radicalization and recruitment to terrorism is an individual decision,<sup>103</sup> but that the concept of lone wolf is overstated and attributes the term "stray dogs" as more appropriate.<sup>104</sup> Jenkins also found that the Internet might inspire individuals, but can "become a substitute for action allowing would-be terrorists to safely engage in vicarious terrorism" rather than endure the risks of real action.<sup>105</sup> Jenkins states, "Reaching does not mean radicalizing, and radicalizing does not mean recruitment to violent jihad. The Internet has facilitated access to many more recruits than al Qaeda could reach personally, but it is low yield mining."

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<sup>100</sup> David Tucker, *Illuminating the Dark Arts of War* (New York, Continuum International: 2012), 97–107.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 98–99.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 103–104.

<sup>103</sup> Jenkins, *Stray Dogs and Virtual Armies*, viii.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., vii.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 17.

The Internet contributes to radicalization, but causation is not attributed to it. The effectiveness is questionable as Jenkins states, “it has not yet produced the army of action-oriented acolytes.”<sup>106</sup> Hence, self-radicalization through the Internet, even if it does exist, may not be the overwhelming threat it is often perceived to be.

A study by Scott Helfstein of the Center for Counterterrorism at West Point complements Jenkins’s contention. Helfstein studied the spread of violent extremism through a social network analysis and found that radicalization requires strong social support and that data did not support the fear of lone-wolf terrorists.<sup>107</sup> He does, however, acknowledge that the virtual community created by Internet social networking may provide the necessary social support and resemble lone-wolf incidents.<sup>108</sup> This finding supports CMC as a way to enter a virtual community and facilitate radicalization. Hence, the term “lone wolf” may be a misnomer in radicalization, but may have some operational application since “...through the lens of execution, whereby individuals who perpetrate an attack by themselves are by definition lone wolves.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Jenkins, *Stray Dogs and Virtual Armies*, viii.

<sup>107</sup> Scott Helfstein, “Edges of Radicalization: Individuals, Networks and Ideas in Violent Extremism,” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, February 2012, 7.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 8 and 34–35.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 28.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Validating the existence of an Internet radicalization threat cannot be accomplished by simply determining whether a radicalized individual viewed CMC or used Internet functionalities in the course of his or her life. The questions to be answered are whether extremist CMC initiated or instigated the extremist worldview change and whether CMC content and Internet functionalities drove the radicalization process. To answer these questions, information must be analyzed to determine the role of CMC, conventional communication, and vulnerabilities associated with the root causes of radicalization.

Studies of root causes of radicalization provide frameworks to evaluate the influence of particular variables impacting worldview shifts. Examining cases where the Internet has been blamed as exacerbating or causing radicalization and weighing the root causes against the CMC will give some objective review as to whether the Internet drives radicalization or merely facilitates what would have happened independent of the Internet. The trick is in determining when CMC can be said to overwhelm the root cause impact so that some validity can be given to the term *Internet radicalization*.

The methodology used in this thesis attempts to expand the method used by David Tucker in his book, *Illuminating the Dark Arts of War*.<sup>110</sup> Tucker reviewed how the Internet has changed how terrorists operate, and challenges the assertions by Marc Sageman regarding the impact of the Internet on human relationships and the impact of Internet websites to inspire extremist radicalization.<sup>111</sup> In his analysis of the problem, Tucker provides a method to evaluate the terrorist cases Sageman cites as evidence of the impact of the Internet on terrorist activity. Tucker compared the face-to-face interaction of the terror cell members with Internet interaction and support obtained from the

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<sup>110</sup> Tucker, *Illuminating the Dark Arts of War*, 97–107.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

Internet.<sup>112</sup> His analysis evaluated the type and sequence of terrorist interaction to challenge Sageman's assertions. The methodology used here will expand upon the categorizing and sequencing with greater detail.

For the purposes of this thesis, CMC will be deemed a cause in the absence of vulnerabilities connected to a root cause and provable separation from direct radicalizing non-Internet content or people. Since the individual operating the computer cannot access radicalizing content on the Internet without intentional action, this thesis will assume that the curiosity driving the individual is not driven by root causes unless a root cause exists. For example, seeking out information as a result of relative deprivation or incidents directly affecting the individual would be beyond normal curiosity, as the information seeking is in response to an existing root cause; however, learning about Islam as a non-Muslim or moderate Muslim as a seeker of religious information would be classified as normal curiosity.

## B. CASE SELECTION

Cases were selected by word-searching variations of the terms “Internet & radicalization & Islam” through research databases, news services, library indices and Internet search engines.<sup>113</sup> Articles found were reviewed to identify specific terrorism-related incidents attributed to Internet radicalization or recruitment. Congressional hearings were searched to discover cases mentioned by witnesses to illustrate the threat of radicalizing content on the Internet or as an example of Internet radicalization. Scholarly articles providing examples of Internet radicalization and recruitment were also utilized to identify study cases. The case selection is not exhaustive, but intended to obtain a significant sample of cases that are alleged to result from Internet radicalization.

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<sup>112</sup> Tucker, *Illuminating the Dark Arts of War*, 100–101.

<sup>113</sup> The terms were searched using, Google, Google Scholar Internet search engines; LexisNexis Academic news service; RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) Global Terrorism Database and Profiles of Perpetrators of Terrorism in the United States Database; and Dudley Knox Library BOSUN search, and ProQuest, EBSCO, and JSTOR journal indices. The time parameter used was January 1, 2004–December 31, 2011.

Twenty-five cases were identified and specific information was obtained from news reports, available criminal indictments and affidavits, and case studies. Some reports included written documents produced by the case subject such as the letters of Carlos Bledsoe to U.S. District Judge Herbert Wright, Jr., and written documents included in the February 2012 Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Zachary Chessler.<sup>114</sup> The cases were evaluated to determine whether sufficient information could be found to permit analysis for Internet radicalization and whether the known facts could clearly exclude the Internet as a radicalizing cause. An example of clear exclusion would be known jihadists accessing the Internet for utility as a tool rather than a knowledge seeker accessing for enlightenment about Islam or the conditions of the Muslim world. A known jihadist's radicalization is assumed, whereas the knowledge seeker is unknown and subject to review. Cases where known jihadists used the Internet for recruitment, proselytizing and operations are excluded as support or utility usage. Cases involving multiple individuals in a network, such as the Toronto 18 Canadian Bomb Plot and the Somali Youth Radicalization cases, are excluded since defining the variable within collective group as a singularity would be not benefit the study. Some individuals associated with the Toronto 18 case, however, are included in the study. Vetting the initial twenty-five cases for exclusion resulted in a final group of nine cases likely to provide insight into the existence of Internet radicalization.

Despite articles inferring connections to Internet radicalization, sixteen of the twenty-five cases were not suitable for analysis in this thesis. The cases, however, provide some insight into how CMC is being used and the assumptions made by observers as to the impact of CMC in the incidents. Frequently, articles cite these cases or cite authorities that used these cases to support their work. The sixteen cases are summarized in the Appendix. Some of the cases have connections to the nine cases that were analyzed. For example, the Toronto 18 Canadian Bomb plot includes individuals in the study and jihadist network links to others. The summaries are included for reference and for review to illustrate the breath of the cases where Internet radicalization or CMC is

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<sup>114</sup> Sen. Comm. on Homeland Security and Gov. Affairs., *Zachary Chessler: A Case Study in Online Islamist Radicalization and Its Meaning for the Threat of Homegrown Terrorism*, Washington D.C.: February 2012.

perceived as enhancing the terror threat and to provide information to the reader of some links mentioned in the case summaries. Network analysis is outside the focus of this thesis; however, limiting the reader to summaries for only the nine selected cases may not provide the broad picture needed to evaluate the complexity of the CMC issue.

## **C. OUTCOME PROBLEM AND VARIABLE IDENTIFICATION**

The difficulty in attributing causation is that the defined outcome—radicalization—is the same in both conventional radicalization and Internet radicalization. The “if A then B” analysis becomes problematic when trying to attribute an outcome to a particular variable and the variable affecting the outcome cannot be isolated and is difficult to measure. Several variables affect the outcome with varying influence, weight, impact, significance and relevance. In this study, we examine three variables contributing to radicalization: conventional communication, computer-mediated communication (CMC) and vulnerability.

### **1. Variables: Conventional Communication, Computer-Mediated Communication and Vulnerability**

Cases were evaluated to determine whether the case subjects engaged in conventional communication with Islamic extremists or jihadi groups, CMC with Islamic extremists or jihadi groups, or accessed Islamic extremist or jihadi CMC content, and whether the subjects could be deemed vulnerable using the EU radicalization model defining radicalization causation in terms of individual, social and external elements. Conventional communications include but are not limited to face-to-face contact, telephone conversations, and written communication through paper and ink. CMC includes chat rooms, video chats, blogs, electronic bulletin boards, websites, and extremist content delivered through computer interface. Since case selection required CMC, the CMC variable will be evaluated in reference to communication content. CMC content is separated as instructional, propaganda, inspirational, operational and travel information. Categorizing CMC content assists in determining the stage of radicalization using the NYPD model and helps to distinguish an information seeker from an operative.

## **2. Vulnerability Framework**

The causes of radicalization have been reviewed in terms of psychology, social psychology, sociology, political science and religion. The sociology, psychological and social psychology models review the root causes of radicalization and break them into external, social and individual elements. These broad classifications are appropriate due to the crossover in disciplines that use these references in some manner. Each element has components found to be driving radicalization. External elements include economic circumstance, political environment and cultural conditions. Social elements typically involve analyzing radicalization through social identity, network dynamics and relative deprivation. Individual elements involve psychological characteristics, personal experiences and impaired rationality. Since this study is in regard to Islam, religious factors will be considered influential through all causation classifications. The cases reviewed are evaluated to determine which vulnerability components can be found within the causation element. The association of cause with the underlying vulnerabilities provides groupings for analysis

The vulnerability components will be defined as follows:

Table 1. Causation-Vulnerability Correlation Table

Causation Element	Vulnerability Component
Individual	Vulnerability caused by age, disability, psychology, emotional state, physical condition or impaired rationality.
External	Vulnerability due to economic, political and cultural circumstances
Social	Vulnerability deemed due to dynamics involving social identity, group identity, relative deprivation and group processes.

## **D. ANALYSIS METHOD**

Anecdotal accounts of the impact of CMC have inductively shaped a direct relationship between CMC and radicalization to conclude that CMC is a driving force behind radicalization. The mere presence of CMC in radicalization cases has led to the theory that radicalization is caused by extremist CMC and results in classifying such radicalization as Internet radicalization. This thesis looks at the interrelationship between

three variables to determine whether CMC has a more prominent impact than the other two variables, dependence between variables, and the time sequence the variables appear in the subject's radicalization process. Reviewing the variables in relation to each other will uncover non-CMC correlations that may have been underestimated in the anecdotal causation scheme. If CMC is present without the significant contribution of conventional communication and without a significant vulnerability, then likelihood exists that radicalization was caused by CMC. If all three are present, then the analysis requires evaluating the sequence the variables appeared in the life of the subject, the persuasiveness and prominence of the particular variable in regard to the other two, and the possible dependence of one variable on the other. For example, if a vulnerable individual attends a radical mosque and then uses CMC to further information gathering and networking, no firm conclusion can be wrought. This is because all variables have significant impact; together they most likely result in a collective impact. The sequence becomes significant since the first extremist contact may instigate the remaining variables. Hence, in this example, greater weight would be given to the vulnerability and conventional communication rather than CMC. With the same reasoning, a vulnerable individual who seeks information on Islam and stumbles on radical jihadi websites—and later joins a virtual network of radicals, travels to a radical mosque or has a personal event that catalyzes the individual's worldview change—would likely support a proximate cause as the initial CMC interaction, rather than the variable events following. If, however, one variable far outweighs the others in impact, quantity and quality of exposure, or personal history, then that persuasive and prominent variable likely plays a greater role in the radicalization than do the others. Two variables existing without the third results in the evaluation of the two variables directly where timing and impact can be compared.

## IV. FINDINGS

### A. CASE REVIEW SUMMARY

Background and radicalization information from the nine selected cases are summarized in this section. Each of the nine cases was reviewed to determine the presence of the variables and the appropriate category for components of CMC and classification of the Vulnerability variable.

Table 2 summarizes the case review results. A cell marked with an X shows that the item existed. An N is used in the Conventional Communication column denotes information that the variable did not exist and a U is unknown. Blank cells in the CMC variable denote the absence of information regarding that variable component. The Vulnerability column provides the causation element and the vulnerability component. Vulnerability can have more than one cause; therefore, the analysis for vulnerability may be greater than the number of cases reviewed.

Table 2. Variable Table

Case Name	Conventional	CMC					Vulnerability
		Inst	Insp	Prop	Ops	Travel	
Hamaad Munshi	X	X			X		Individual: Youth
Roshonara Choudhry	N		X	X			Social: Relative Deprivation
Nicky Reilly	X	X	X	X			Individual: Mental Health
Colleen LaRose	U	X	X	X	X	X	Individual: Mental Health
Mohammed Hassan Khalid	X	X	X	X	X		Individual: Youth
Arid Uka aka Abu Reyyan	X		X	X			Social: Relative Deprivation; Individual: Youth
Betim Kaziu and Sulejah Hadzovic	U			X			Social: Relative Deprivation
Mohamed Osman Mohamud	X			X			Social: Social Identity and Relative Deprivation; Individual: Youth
Abdul Basheer Abul Kader	U			X			Social: Relative Deprivation
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	

## **1. Hamaad Munshi**

Hamaad Munshi is the grandson of a UK Shariaa judge and started connecting with Islamic militants at fifteen years old.<sup>115</sup> Munshi used the Internet to access information about creating explosives and suicide vests and to participate in jihadist web groups.<sup>116</sup> He had direct contact with jihadist website developer Aabid Khan at a local mosque. Aabid Khan is the Islamist militant recruiter who communicated with the Toronto 18 through the Internet and attended terrorist training camps in Pakistan. Munshi's web presence mainly involved closed networks of other extremists and was likely recruited by Khan to join the online network that included al Qaeda Internet administrator Younes Tsouli aka Irhabi007.<sup>117</sup> The likelihood that his devout Muslim family contributed to his extremist viewpoint must be given considerable weight. Radicalization likely occurred prior to accessing radicalizing material on the Internet and would have been cultivated by the top-down recruitment efforts of Khan. Munshi's youth calls into question whether his age plays a substantial part in his susceptibility to radicalization.

## **2. Roshonara Choudhry**

Roshonara Choudhry is a Muslim woman who, on May 14, 2010, stabbed UK Parliament Member Stephen Timms for voting to declare war against Iraq. The case appears to be self-radicalization because the only known radicalizing influence was the radical online sermons Choudhry listened to on the Internet.<sup>118</sup> Choudhry says she listened online and admitted viewing jihadist websites including the *Revolution Muslim* website run by Jesse Curtis Morton.<sup>119</sup> She stated her ideas for vengeance came from

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<sup>115</sup> “Hamaad Munshi,” *Global Jihad.net*, updated July 10, 2008, [http://www.globaljihad.net/view\\_page.asp?id=1165](http://www.globaljihad.net/view_page.asp?id=1165).

<sup>116</sup> Simon Hughes, “Britain’s Youngest Terrorist,” *The Sun*, September 12, 2008, <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/justice/1576468/Britains-youngest-al-Qaeda-terrorist-Hamaad-Munshi-in-jail-Osama-Bin-Laden-fanatic-joined-terrorist-group-at-15.html>.

<sup>117</sup> Stevens and Neumann, “Countering Online Radicalisation,” 14.

<sup>118</sup> James Brandon, “The Decline of Jihadist Activity in the United Kingdom,” *CTC Sentinel* 4, no. 10 (October 2011): 16.

<sup>119</sup> U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, U.S. v Jesse Curtis Morton, Statement of Facts.

listening to more than one hundred hours of Internet lectures by Anwar al-Awlaki.<sup>120</sup> In her third and final year at King's College, she perceived that the school was doing things against her interest as a Muslim. She listened to al-Awlaki's speeches on the Internet and decided that Muslims should look out for each other, and not sit back and do nothing when other Muslims suffer.<sup>121</sup> She said that a video of Shaykh Abdullah Azzam, declaring that every Muslim is obligated to defend Muslim land, persuaded her to seek revenge on behalf of the people of Iraq and attempt to kill Timms for his vote on the Iraq war. This impetus for violence reflects relative deprivation theory for radicalization. Police believe she had no direct contact with Islamic extremists.<sup>122</sup> Prior to her radicalization, Choudhry was an exceptional student with a bright future. Her Bangladeshi parents had no indication that she would radicalize. She claims to have stumbled across the radical videos on YouTube. Up until that point, she said, she did not know much about her religion.<sup>123</sup> Seeking information on the Internet to learn about her religion places her earliest Internet use in the self-identification category; however, it should be pointed out that she moved directly and swiftly into indoctrination, political radicalization and to jihadization.

### **3. Nicky Reilly**

Nicky Reilly was convicted for attempting a terror bombing in Exeter, England, on May 22, 2008. He created a caustic chemical bomb in a soda bottle and when he was constructing it in a restaurant washroom it exploded in his hands.<sup>124</sup> Reilly is viewed as

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<sup>120</sup> Vikram Dodd, "Roshonara Choudhry: Police Interview Extracts," *The Guardian*, November 3, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/nov/03/roshonara-choudhry-police-interview>.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Gordon Rayner and John Bingham, "Stephen Timms Stabbing: How Internet Sermons Turned Quiet Student into Fanatic," *The Telegraph*, November 2, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/8105516/Stephen-Timms-stabbing-how-internet-sermons-turned-quiet-student-into-fanatic.html>.

<sup>123</sup> Tom Rawstorne, "The Remote-controlled al Qaeda Assassin: How Brilliant Student was Brainwashed into Stabbing MP," *Mail Online.com*, November 6, 2010, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1327096/Roshonara-Choudhry-brainwashed-Al-Qaeda-stabbing-MP-Stephen-Timms.html>.

<sup>124</sup> Duncan Gardham, "Muslim Convert Admits Attempted Suicide Terror Attack," *The Telegraph*, October 15, 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/3201462/Muslim-convert-admits-attempted-suicide-terror-attack.html>.

mentally disabled and said to have a mind of a child. He was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder.<sup>125</sup> Medical professionals, who knew him, however, said he had special needs, but was not stupid and displayed linear thinking.<sup>126</sup> Reilly attempted suicide twice. His family life was poor with a stepfather who was a heroin dealer.<sup>127</sup> He became obsessed with the 9/11 attacks and saw the U.S. and UK as evil and frequently viewed violent videos depicting beheadings. He converted to Islam in 2003 and began to attend mosques. He was said to continuously use the computer.<sup>128</sup> Devon and Cornwall Police Deputy Chief Constable Tony Melville has stated, "We believe that, despite his weak and vulnerable state, he was preyed upon, radicalised and taken advantage of."<sup>129</sup> This case provides support that Internet propaganda can have an effect on a mentally challenged individual. Radicalization occurred, but it is not certain whether another person that Reilly associated with recruited him to act. There are reports that Reilly received a text message of encouragement shortly before he went to the restaurant with the bomb.<sup>130</sup> Reilly's vulnerability plays a substantial role, as does conventional communication in providing 9/11 information and relationships at the local mosque.

#### **4. Colleen LaRose aka Jihad Jane:**

Colleen Larose converted to Islam and assumed the name Jihad Jane and Fatima LaRose on the Internet. As Jihad Jane, LaRose posted a comment on YouTube stating she

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<sup>125</sup> A. Aaron Weisburd, "Why Nicky Reilly Matters," *SOFI-Society for Internet Research* (blog) October 20, 2008, <http://www.sofir.org/sarchives/006279.php>.

<sup>126</sup> Duncan Gardham and Richard Savill, "Exeter Terror Bomber Nicky Reilly Was Known as a 'Big Friendly Giant,'" *The Guardian*, October 15, 2008, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/3201863/Exeter-terror-bomber-Nicky-Reilly-was-known-as-Big-Friendly-Giant.html>.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Jamie Doward, "Inside the Bizarre World of the Big Friendly Giant," *The Guardian*, May 24, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/may/25/uksecurity.terrorism>.

<sup>130</sup> Steven Morris, "Nicky Reilly: From BFG to Failed Suicide Bomber," *The Guardian*, October 15, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/oct/15/uksecurity1>.

is “desperate to do something somehow to help” the suffering Muslim people.<sup>131</sup> She became a militant jihadist and was arrested when she attempted to fly to the Netherlands as part of a plot to kill Swedish artist Lars Vilks. Vilks had angered Muslims when he created a portrait of the prophet Muhammad as a dog. As part of the Vilks plot, she was in contact with others through the Internet including Ali Charaf Damache in Ireland and Mohammad Hassan Khalid in Maryland.<sup>132</sup> News reports of interviews with LaRose’s neighbors said, “she is a polite yet eccentric woman who was known to talk loudly to her cats and on occasion drown her sorrows by ‘hitting the bottle hard.’”<sup>133</sup> She had attempted suicide and was treated for depression.<sup>134</sup> Her mental health, instability in her personal life and alcoholism likely made her susceptible to the jihadist message. There is insufficient information to determine whether her conversion to Islam was facilitated by direct contact or whether she sought the information online and converted. Conveniently delivered Internet content may have contributed to her conversion; however, without more information, the role the Internet played initially is only speculation. Her case illustrates the risk of vulnerable individuals being affected by radicalizing content and extremist networks using CMC. The absence of information about conventional communication with the local Muslim population results in a strong implication that CMC catalyzed the change to radical Islam and connected her to the jihadi network that she ultimately sought to assist.

##### **5. Mohammed Hassan Khalid:**

Mohammed Hassan Khalid was radicalized as a juvenile and is believed to be the youngest person charged for terrorism in a U.S. civilian court.<sup>135</sup> Khalid is a Pakistani

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<sup>131</sup> U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, Case # 10CR 123, date filed March 4, 2010, U.S. v Colleen R. LaRose aka Fatima LaRose, aka Jihad Jane, Indictment, 3.

<sup>132</sup> U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, Case # 11-420, filed March 27, 2012, U.S. v Mohammad Hassan Khalid, Government’s Change of Plea Memorandum.

<sup>133</sup> Gregory Boyce, “When Looks Can Kill: The Story of Jihad Jane AKA Colleen Renee LaRose,” *Examiner.com*, March 13, 2010, <http://www.examiner.com/article/when-looks-can-kill-the-story-of-jihad-jane-aka-colleen-renee-larose>.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> “Honor Student Pleads Guilty in ‘Jihad Jane’ Terror Plot,” *MSNBC.msn.com*, May 4, 2012, [http://usnews.msnbc.msn.com/\\_news/2012/05/04/11542256-honor-student-pleads-guilty-in-jihad-jane-terror-plot?lite](http://usnews.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/05/04/11542256-honor-student-pleads-guilty-in-jihad-jane-terror-plot?lite).

citizen who moved from Pakistan to Baltimore in 2008. As early as age fifteen, he sought out and corresponded through Internet and chat rooms with the same network as Colleen LaRose and participated in plans to send money to fund the group's plan to kill Swedish artist Lars Vilks. Khalid also had contact with another terror arrestee, Emerson Begolly and commented online during a chat to Begolly that he would like to commit "Columbine like attacks," referencing the massacre of students at a Colorado high school by two students.<sup>136</sup> His assimilation into the jihadist network resulted from CMC, but whether he was radicalized prior to the contacts is uncertain. His age creates some concern about susceptibility, just as the mental condition of Nicky Reilly created similar concern. The cause of his radicalization is uncertain, but the cause of his recruitment can be attributed to CMC. But for the Internet communication functionalities, he would not have been in contact with extremists located in Pennsylvania (LaRose and Begolly) and Ireland (Ali Charaf Damache.) He was arrested on July 6, 2011, and pled guilty on May 4, 2012, to terrorism charges.<sup>137</sup>

## **6. Abdul Basheer Abdul Kader**

Abdul Basheer Abdul Kader was arrested after he attempted to join the Taliban in Afghanistan in February 2007.<sup>138</sup> It is thought that Abdul Basheer self-radicalized through Internet content.<sup>139</sup> Abdul Basheer is a Singaporean lawyer who worked at a top law firm and was a well-known lecturer until his militant Islamic views led him to attempt to travel to Afghanistan.<sup>140</sup> Prior to radicalizing, Abdul Basheer was a non-

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<sup>136</sup> John Shiffman, "Teen Tied to Jihad Jane Allegedly Plotted School Shooting," *The Inquirer*, August 28, 2011, [http://articles.philly.com/2011-08-28/news/29938534\\_1\\_jihad-jane-mohammed-terror-cases](http://articles.philly.com/2011-08-28/news/29938534_1_jihad-jane-mohammed-terror-cases).

<sup>137</sup> U.S. Department of Justice Press Release, "Maryland Man Pleads Guilty to Conspiracy to Provide Material Support to Terrorists," May 4, 2012, <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2012/May/12-nsd-579.html>.

<sup>138</sup> Institute for Strategic Dialogue, "Radicalisation: The Role of the Internet."

<sup>139</sup> Nazry Bahrawi, "One Abdul Basher is One Too Many," *channelnewasia.com*, June 11, 2007, <http://www.channelnewasia.com/stories/singaporelocalnews/view/281485/1.html>. Also see Kumar Ramakrishna, "Self-Radicalisation: The Case of Abdul Basheer Abdul Kader," *RSIS Commentaries*, June 11, 2007 (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University).

<sup>140</sup> Sue-Ann Chia, "'Self-radicalised' Law Grad, 4 JI Militants Held," *Straits Times*, June 9, 2007, [http://www.straitstimes.com/Free/Story/STIStory\\_127321.html](http://www.straitstimes.com/Free/Story/STIStory_127321.html).

observant Muslim who enjoyed nightlife.<sup>141</sup> The Singapore Home Ministry claims Basheer's views were "shaped by radical discourse that he avidly looked up on the Internet," and that he began developing radical mindset in 2004 "to wage militant jihad in the land where Muslims were under attack."<sup>142</sup> He had turned to the Internet for answers to his questions on religion and chanced upon radical explanations that resonated with him. Waging jihad in Muslim lands to engage perceived injustices to Muslims indicates radicalization and action motivated by relative deprivation. The motivation to move from non-practicing Muslim in a successful legal career to a jihadist is unclear, but as a seeker, Basheer used CMC to guide his worldview shift. Relative deprivation may have driven his recruitment, but there is insufficient evidence to determine whether it drove him to seek out Islamic content on the Internet. Hence, without further information about conventional communication, it appears CMC played a significant role in his radicalization.

## 7. Arid Uka aka Abu Reyyan

Arid Uka, armed with a pistol, attacked and killed U.S. servicemen at the Frankfurt, Germany airport in February 2011. He told police the night before the attack his desire to kill U.S. servicemen was fueled by playing violent video games and viewing a video online in which U.S. soldiers were apparently raping a Muslim girl.<sup>143</sup> The twenty-one year old Kosovo Albanian came from a devout but not deeply religious Muslim family with a father who was very strict and harsh with him.<sup>144</sup> Uka began to have trouble in school, and the principal suspected emotional problems or depression.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Ramakrishna, "Self-Radicalisation: The Case of Abdul Basheer Abdul Kader," 2.

<sup>142</sup> Chia, "Self-radicalized Law Grad."

<sup>143</sup> Matthias Bartsch and Holger Stark, "Islamism and the Like Button: Can Radicalization Via Facebook Be Stopped?" *Der Spiegel*, March 15, 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/islamism-and-the-like-button-can-radicalization-via-facebook-be-stopped-a-750912.html>.

<sup>144</sup> Frederik Pleitgen, "Killer of U.S. Airmen is Radical Muslim, German Official Says," *cnn.com*, March 4, 2011, [http://articles.cnn.com/2011-03-04/world/germany.shooting\\_1\\_german-intelligence-kosovo-german-authorities/2?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://articles.cnn.com/2011-03-04/world/germany.shooting_1_german-intelligence-kosovo-german-authorities/2?_s=PM:WORLD).

<sup>145</sup> Bartsch and Stark., "Islamism and the Like Button."

It was reported that Uka was likely radicalized a few weeks before the shooting.<sup>146</sup> In 2009, four to five weeks before the attack, Uka developed a web of digital acquaintances in the Islamist community including radical Islamic preachers.<sup>147</sup> Uka joined an Islamist Facebook group called Dawa FFM, listened to lectures from that group and wrote about jihad.<sup>148</sup> The role of Islam in his life became more apparent in his online gaming personas. His email name and Facebook name took on Islamic significance as a virtual identity.<sup>149</sup> Whether Uka had conventional communication with Islamic extremists is uncertain, but likely. He resided in the same apartment complex as al Qaeda associate Rami Makanesi, and it is likely he had contact with him.<sup>150</sup><sup>151</sup> This case shows that the Internet did have some impact on moving Arid Uka to action, but indications of mental or emotional problems coupled with second-generation diaspora issues<sup>152</sup> may be the root cause of radicalization rather than content he found on the Internet. If his contact with Rami Makanesi influenced him, the Internet and violent video games may have supported and inspired but not caused his extremist views and actions.

## **8. Betim Kaziu and Sulejah Hadzovic**

Betim Kaziu and Sulejah Hadzovic came from Muslim families and grew up in Brooklyn, New York. Kaziu was convicted and sentenced to twenty-seven years in prison for conspiracy to commit murder in a foreign country, conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists, attempt to provide material support to a foreign terrorist

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<sup>146</sup> “Islamist Shooter Radicalized in Germany,” *The Local*, March 3, 2011, <http://www.thelocal.de/national/20110303-33493.html>.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., Also see, David Crawford, Laura Stevens and Marcus Walker, “Frankfurt Shooting Suspect Had Links to Radical Islamist,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 3, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703300904576178350189332110.html>.

<sup>148</sup> Bartsch and Stark, “Islamism and the Like Button.”

<sup>149</sup> Ibid..

<sup>150</sup> Von Dirk Banse und Martin Lutz, “Attentäter hatte Kontakte zu Terrorverdächtigen” [Bomber Had Contacts to Terror Suspects], *Welt Online*, May 3, 2011, translated to English by [www.translate.google.com](http://www.translate.google.com).

<sup>151</sup> “Mutmaßlicher Täter hatte Kontakt zu Dschihadist” [Alleged perpetrators had connections to jihadist], *Augsburger Allegemeine*, March 3, 2011, <http://www.augsburger-allegemeine.de/politik/Mutmasslicher-Taeter-hatte-Kontakt-zu-Dschihadist-id14086701.html>, translated to English by [www.translate.google.com](http://www.translate.google.com).

<sup>152</sup> Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*.

organization, and conspiracy to use a firearm.<sup>153</sup> <sup>154</sup> Kaziu and Hadzovic's families emigrated from Yugoslavia. Hadzovic claims that he and Kaziu radicalized after viewing videos of Osama bin Laden. Both individuals traveled to Egypt for terror training. Hadzovic returned to the U.S. after he heard a bridge-building speech by President Barak Obama. Upon his return to the U.S. after the FBI contacted him, he cooperated in the government investigation and became a prosecution witness against Kaziu. Kaziu continued to travel and attempted to join al-Qaeda and al-Shabab. He was arrested in Pakistan and sent back to the U.S. where he was arrested and convicted for aiding terrorists.<sup>155</sup> Sulejah Hadzovic testified, "We were upset at what was happening in places like Abu Ghraib prison and Guantanamo Bay, how they were humiliating and torturing Muslims there. It's what ultimately made us want to go and fight in jihad."<sup>156</sup> The conventional news coverage of the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay incidents must be considered when evaluating the impact of CMC. The indignities suffered by the Muslim prisoners would inspire feelings of injustice to Muslims and result in relative deprivation. Radical CMC content would support the in-group/out-group circumstance and contribute to radicalization, but inspiration to seek the information likely originated with conventional communication. Social conditions brought to the attention of Kaziu and Hadzovic by conventional communications may have had a greater impact on the path to radicalization than CMC. Once CMC was accessed, it provided support for further movement along the path to jihad, such as contact with jihadists and travel to Egypt.

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<sup>153</sup> "New Yorker Who Tried to Join Jihadists in Afghanistan So He Could Kill U.S. Troops Sentenced to 27 Years," *Daily Mail*, March 2, 2012, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2109623/New-Yorker-Betim-Kaziu-tried-join-jihadists-Afghanistan-sentenced-27-years-prison.html#ixzz20zq1Tmb3>

<sup>154</sup> "NYC Man Gets 27 Years in Homegrown Terror Case," *Wall Street Journal Online*, March 2, 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/article/AP51343368c6ae445d8d21c288e2db43a5.html>.

<sup>155</sup> U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of New York, Press Release, "Brooklyn Resident Indicted for Conspiracy to Commit Murder Overseas and Conspiracy to Provide Material Support to Terrorists," September 24, 2009, <http://www.fbi.gov/newyork/press-releases/2009/nyfo092409a.htm>.

<sup>156</sup> "The Case of Betim Kaziu," *Global Jihad.com*, Updated April 19, 2012, [http://www.globaljihad.net/view\\_page.asp?id=2202](http://www.globaljihad.net/view_page.asp?id=2202).

## **9. Mohamed Osman Mohamud**

Somali immigrant Mohamed Osman Mohamud exchanged 150 emails with jihadist Samir Khan beginning in February 2009 when Mohamud was seventeen years old.<sup>157</sup> Mohamud said he began thinking of becoming a jihadist as early as age fifteen.<sup>158</sup> He authored articles for *Jihad Recollections*, an online jihadi publication.<sup>159</sup> There is evidence that he had personal contact with an unnamed Pakistani jihadist recruiter in Oregon and email correspondence with him in August 2009, after the Pakistani returned to Pakistan. University of Minnesota sociology professor Cawo Abdi commented to the press regarding the reasons for radicalization of Somali youths stating, “They are trying to find somewhere they can fit in. This has led some to join gangs, while others are lured by jihadist websites and YouTube videos on the Internet.”<sup>160</sup> Isgow Mohamed, executive director of the Northwest Somali Community Organization, stated that he believes information received on the Internet influenced Mohamud.<sup>161</sup> Unlike the Minnesota Somali youth case, this Somali youth focused his jihadist purpose on Osama bin Laden and the Afghanistan situation rather than the Somalia and al-Shabab activity. He identified with the umma rather than his ethnic group and historical political conflict. The unnamed Pakistani jihadi recruiter may have instigated his interest in Afghanistan. For this reason, the power of the personal contact can be implied to motivate Mohamud more significantly than the Internet content. CMC furthered his association with violent jihadists, but his radicalization appears to precede recruitment and commitment to

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<sup>157</sup> Bryan Denson, “Mohamed Mohamud’s Dad told FBI his Son was Being ‘Brainwashed’ by Jihadists,” *Oregonlive.com*, May 1, 2012, [http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2012/05/mohamed\\_mohamuds\\_dad\\_told\\_fbi.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2012/05/mohamed_mohamuds_dad_told_fbi.html).

<sup>158</sup> U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon, U.S. v Mohamed Osman Mohamud, November 26, 2010, Criminal Complaint and Affidavit. Also see, Colin Miner, Liz Robbins and Erik Eckholm, “F.B.I Says Oregon Suspect Planned ‘Grand’ Attack,” *NY Times*, November 27, 2010, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/28/us/28portland.html?\\_r=2&hp](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/28/us/28portland.html?_r=2&hp).

<sup>159</sup> U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon, U.S. v Mohamed Osman Mohamud, November 26, 2010, Criminal Complaint and Affidavit.

<sup>160</sup> Jesse McKinley and William Yardley, “Suspect in Oregon Bomb Plot Called Confused,” *New York Times*, November 28, 2019, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/29/us/29suspect.html?\\_r=1&ref=mohamedosmanmohamud..](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/29/us/29suspect.html?_r=1&ref=mohamedosmanmohamud..)

<sup>161</sup> Caryn Brooks, “Portland’s Bomb Plot: Who is Mohamed Mohamud?” *Time*, November 28, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2033372,00.html>.

violence. Also, by stating that he had jihadist dreams as early as age fifteen, age vulnerability appears as a factor and coincides with the time period that he would have met with the unnamed Pakistani.

## B. ANALYSIS

### 1. Conventional Communication

Of the nine cases reviewed, five have evidence of conventional communication involving face-to-face contact with jihadists. In three cases—Colleen LaRose, Arid Uka and Abdul Basheer Abud Kader—it is unknown whether there was any conventional communication with radical Islamists or jihadists. In a single case, Roshonara Choudhry, there was no conventional communication at all. Choudhry claims that all of her contact with radical Islamist material came from the Internet.

Table 3. Conventional Communication

Conventional Communication	
Face to Face: Mosque	3
Face to Face: International	1
Unknown Conventional Communication	4
No conventional contact	1

The conventional communication location has significance, because personal contact has been acknowledged as having greater impact than CMC.<sup>162</sup> In the Munshi, Reilly and Mohamed Osman Mohamud cases, contact occurred at a local mosque. Reilly, as a Muslim convert, first encountered radical Islam on the Internet prior to conversion and prior to the mosque contacts. Reilly's sequence of contact differs from lifelong Muslim Munshi and weight must be given to the CMC, whereas Munshi's upbringing and Islamic community contacts must be given greater weight than his CMC contacts. In Oregon, Somali Mohamud met an unknown Pakistani jihadist recruiter, whom he later emailed. Prior to meeting the Pakistani, Mohamud exchanged email with Samir Khan.

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<sup>162</sup> Bradley M. Okdie and Rosanna E. Guadagno, "Social Influence and Computer Mediated Communication," in *Handbook of Research on Computer Mediated Communication*, ed. Sigrid Kelsey and Kirk St. Amant (IG Global, 2008), 482, doi: 10.4018/978-1-59904-863-5.

Mohamud's CMC, by predating the direct conventional contact, gives greater weight to the role of CMC than the conventional contact. Mohammed Hassan Khalid had unknown contact in Pakistan, but after immigration to the U.S., he began using the Internet to join jihadi groups. Whether he was radicalized due to experiences and contacts in Pakistan is not certain, but his youth vulnerability may have played a substantial role in his radicalization.

## **2. Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)**

All cases have evidence of CMC. The most prevalent content accessed is propaganda. All but Hamaad Munshi accessed propaganda. Munshi accessed instructional material for creating explosives and suicide vests. His face-to-face contact with jihadist website developer Aabid Khan likely provided the impetus to use CMC for operational planning. His conservative Islamic family background and youthful contact with radical Islam likely explain the absence of propaganda. Munshi, Colleen LaRose and Mohammed Hassan Khalid used CMC for operational planning. Four case subjects used CMC for instruction. Munshi, LaRose and Mohammed Hassan Khalid were included in that group of four. The remaining person, Nicky Reilly, used the Internet to learn how to construct a chemical reaction bomb, but there is no information that he used CMC to plan, coordinate or execute his attempt to explode the bomb in a restaurant. The link between instruction and operation may be significant and indicate a tipping point in the use of CMC in transitioning from a seeker of information to a radicalized individual recruited for action. Inspirational content was accessed in five of the nine cases. Each of the five individuals who viewed inspirational content also viewed propaganda content. In two of the five cases, LaRose and Khalid, operational content was accessed; in three cases, LaRose, Khalid and Reilly also accessed instructional content. Roshonara Choudhry is the only case where only inspirational and propaganda was viewed. Only LaRose utilized the Internet for travel information as part of her operation to kill Lars Vilks in the Netherlands

Table 4. Computer-mediated Communication

<b>Computer-Mediated Communication</b>	
Website	9
Email	4
Chat room	3
Forums	4
Blogs	1
Text Message	1
Online Games	1

All individuals used websites on the worldwide web to access information. Four subjects—Reilly, LaRose, Khalid and Uka—used both synchronous and asynchronous communication functionalities. Reilly, LaRose, Khalid and Uka used synchronous chat rooms. Reilly was the only subject recorded as using text messaging. The same four used asynchronous communication through electronic forums. Uka's information did not disclose use of email, but information did disclose email communications by Mohamed Osman Mohamud. Reilly and LaRose used blogs. Uka admitted being inspired to jihad by violent online games.

Distinguishing between the use of synchronous and asynchronous communication provides some insight into whether the subjects were mere consumers of information or participants in a network or group and in active contact with persuasive personalities. The synchronous/asynchronous distinction is important when attributing radicalizing power to CMC. Asynchronous communication presents one-to-many communication, whereas synchronous communication can encompass many-to-one communication—group and network type—or one-to-one communication. In both cases of synchronous communications, top-down influence and recruitment may be facilitated by the relationship between parties that develop from direct contact. The character of the relationship becomes more significant than the medium used to make the connection. With asynchronous CMC, the availability and the attraction of the material becomes significant in drawing interest in the content and facilitating grassroots growth for the worldview expressed. A bottom-up influence toward radicalization and recruitment may be supported by the message rather than the personality.

### **3. Vulnerability**

CMC propaganda often conveys a message of unjust treatment of Muslims to instigate feelings of relative deprivation.<sup>163</sup> <sup>164</sup> CMC can also create a sense of collective social identity by bringing unifying information to a population.<sup>165</sup> In both the Arid Uka and Mohamed Osman Mohamud cases, youth vulnerability and relative deprivation were present. Each element is significant, but impressionable youth may offer susceptibility that is exploited with content feeding group identification, intergroup conflict and relative deprivation. In two of the cases, individual and social factors were present. Six cases disclose individual vulnerabilities. Four of the cases involved youthful individuals, and two cases, Reilly and LaRose, involved mental health issues. Relative deprivation as a social factor was found in five cases.

**Table 5. Vulnerability**

<b>Vulnerability</b>	
Social	5
Relative Deprivation	5
Social Identity	1
Individual	5
Youth	2
Mental Health	3
External	0

### **4. Radicalization Process Staging**

Examining the stage in the radicalization process where CMC enters the radicalization process helps discern whether CMC influences the other variables or whether the other variables motivate the individual to utilize CMC. Sequencing helps understand the path to radicalization and the combination of inputs and relative strengths that create the output. If CMC appears in an early stage of radicalization, attributing

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<sup>163</sup> Moghaddam, *How Globalization Spurs Terrorism*, 49.

<sup>164</sup> Council of the European Union, “Radicalisation, Recruitment and the EU Counter-radicalisation Strategy: Transnational Terrorism, Security & the Rule of Law,” November 17, 2008, 68, <http://www.transnationalterrorism.eu/tekst/publications/WP4%20Del%207.pdf>.

<sup>165</sup> Sageman, *Understanding Terrorist Networks*, 163.

greater power to the messages carried by and the relationships created with CMC can be justified. However, if CMC use begins later in the radicalization stages, then the utility of CMC to support the radicalizing individual is deemed more significant than the worldview changing content.

If CMC initiates an unfolding sequence of events, CMC can be inferred to cause the process to commence, but not necessarily the specific cause of the outcome. CMC is the primer, but the ultimate outcome may be dependent upon the other variables in the process. Correlation, however, can be attributed to exist in fact rather than in speculation if the facts disclose CMC driving further progress through the radicalization process. Some impact exists, but cannot be characterized as classical causation. Hence, sequencing is important in this thesis for determining the significance of CMC when evaluating the pre-existing state of the individual utilizing CMC. Sequencing is relevant for analyzing radicalization, since the first contact with extremists through social networking or access, and consumption of radicalizing CMC may begin the process of radicalization when the other variables are initially absent. Using CMC after the other variables are already present and influencing the conduct of the individual reduces support for the importance of CMC in driving the outcome.

The New York City Police Department radicalization model is used for this comparison. This model has been criticized for its lack of academic rigor and small sample of cases, but the model provides a simple framework for understanding the staging process in Islamic radicalization.<sup>166</sup>

NYPD created its radicalization model to understand where in the radicalization process law enforcement may be able to identify radicalizing behavior revealing terrorist intentions and planning. The NYPD model breaks the stages down into pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination and jihadization. The model implies a timeline and can be used to evaluate the relative stage the individual was in when CMC contributed to radicalization. Identifying individual conduct that can relate to the

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<sup>166</sup> Faiza Patel, “Rethinking Radicalization,” Brennan Center for Justice, New York University School of Law (2011).

particular radicalization stage becomes tricky when using the NYPD model alone. To tie the model to behavior, this thesis associates the NYPD framework with behaviors identified by Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman.

Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman provide six behavior manifestations that can be observed and associated with the indoctrination phase. The behaviors appear cumulative as the person proceeds through radicalization, and can be thought of as steps in a progression within the indoctrination stage. Fragmenting the indoctrination phase in this manner assists in discerning conduct in the early indoctrination phase from the self-identification phase and the late indoctrination phase from the jihadization phase. The breakdown also assists in determining whether a path to indoctrination has already been set prior to using CMC. For example, an individual entering the cyber-realm for the first time to contribute to proselytizing-advocating force would be considered well on his way to full radicalization with CMC being only a tool. Conversely, if the individual were seeking support for a legalistic interpretation of Islam when he enters the cyber-realm, CMC content would have a substantial impact on whether he progresses further.

Behaviors for the pre-radicalization stage, self-identification and jihadization stages of the NYPD model are defined as typical or unremarkable behavior, association and network behavior, and operational planning, respectively. These behaviors are consistent with the NYPD objective indicators sought to be discovered by that study. Table 6 provides the associations.

Table 6. Staging and Behavior Indicators

<b>NYPD Model Stage</b>	<b>Behavioral Indicators</b>
Pre-Radicalization	Typical behavior
Self-Identification	Association and Network behavior
Indoctrination	Legalistic Interpretation Trust Selective Authority Schism Between the West and Islam Low Tolerance for Deviance Proselytizing-advocating force Political Radicalization
Jihadization	Operational planning for jihad/Recruitment

In applying the staging method to the cases, seven of the cases showed CMC usage beginning in the self-identification stage, one in the jihadization stage, and one in the indoctrination stage. Of those in the self-identification stage, only Roshonara Choudhry showed no overt behaviors. Choudhry's statement that she used the Internet to find information regarding Islam places her in the self-identification stage, but it should be noted she proceeded rapidly from pre-radicalization through to jihadist action by stabbing UK Parliament Member Stephen Timms.

The sole indoctrination case involved Betim Kaziu and Sulejah Hadzovic. They used the Internet to view videos by Osama bin Laden and then attempted to join al-Qaeda. Sulejah Hadzovic stated that he and Kaziu wanted to fight jihad due to the persecution of Muslims by the U.S., implying the schism between the West and Islam as a motivator. By seeking out bin Laden videos, Kaziu displayed a disposition that moved beyond finding association and network. He sought information from a well-known jihadist source, implying he had trust in him and desired the legalistic view of Islam promoted by the source.

Hamaad Munshi was the only person found to be in the jihadization stage. Munshi's background and contacts established his worldview prior to using CMC. He sought information regarding explosives with the intent to become an operational jihadist.

Table 7. Case Staging and Behaviors

Case Name	NYPD Stage	G-R & G Behavior
Hamaad Munshi	Jihadization	Operational Planning
Roshonara Choudhry	Self-identification	No overt behavior
Nicky Reilly	Self-identification	Association and Network
Colleen LaRose	Self-identification	Association and Network
Mohammed Hassan Khalid	Self-identification	Association and Network
Arid Uka aka Abu Reyyan	Self-identification	Association and Network
Betim Kaziu and Sulejah Hadzovic	Indoctrination	Schism between West and Islam
Mohamed Osman Mohamud	Self-identification	Association and Network
Abdul Basheer Abdul Kader	Self-identification	Schism between West and Islam

## C. DISCUSSION

### 1. Causation and Correlation and Comprehension of Threat

If Internet radicalization is real, then it is a distinct kind of radicalization with a causation path that includes CMC. If it is mere correlation, then radicalization is not distinct and only provides a path to radicalization that could be affected through another means. To discern this idea, causation must be understood in terms of its meaning in systems and processes.

Philosophers of science have identified causation as important in determining a relation between events.<sup>167</sup> There is a question whether causation is deterministic or merely functionally related. An inductive conclusion that CMC causes radicalization has been drawn from the observation that some radicalized individuals used CMC to access extremist information, or participate in or join a jihadist network. Concluding that a single element drives the outcome from among several elements in the complex process of radicalization attributes causation to that single element without verifying whether the CMC element actually changed the outcome from the outcome that would have resulted had CMC not been involved.<sup>168</sup> A particular variable cannot be a cause of an outcome if the outcome cannot be proved to have changed by the application of the variable. An outcome that results when a variable is present in a process cannot be assumed to be the cause of the outcome either. The presence or absence of the variable and the likelihood that the outcome will change may present a correlation between the two, but not necessarily causation.

The impact of CMC upon the radicalization process cannot be observed directly through experimentation. There is an inherent difficulty in testing for cause in social sciences. Experiments cannot be conducted to control for dependent and independent variables as in a laboratory. Creating a scenario or experiment to test the effects of an

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<sup>167</sup> Phil Dowe, “Causal Processes,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, December 8, 1996, revised September 10, 2007, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/causation-process/>.

<sup>168</sup> Phil Dowe, 4. Salmon’s Mark Transmission Theory essentially states that causation can be attributed to an intervening modification in a process that changes the process from the point of the modification to other elements in the process and outcome without intervention by any other interactions.

intervention, such as CMC, cannot be accomplished; social science is left with observing what has occurred, and finding a logical and scientifically supportable method to understand the complex process and attribute causation.<sup>169</sup>

Another difficulty in exploring the effect of CMC on radicalization is the fact that the radicalization process is not linear. The impact of each variable on the other produces a feedback loop supporting or diminishing the drive to radicalize and commit an act of terrorism. Conventional communication can drive the desire to use CMC to attain greater understanding, and a vulnerability can be exploited, as well as aided with CMC information focusing on the root cause. Examples of CMC countering radicalization can be found online, as well as CMC instigating radicalization.<sup>170</sup> The nature of all communication, the impact of all content, and the affect upon vulnerabilities creates a complex system that hinders verifying causation since the variables are not clearly independent and are adjacent variables.<sup>171</sup> Attributing causation to CMC with scientific certainty may be impossible. The best that can be derived from this study is that Islamic extremists are using CMC and the functionalities of the Internet provide the same ubiquitous convenience, access, connectivity, and social impact that others utilize for a variety of outcomes. The “demassification” of mass communications through CMC constructed to target specific audiences has been acknowledged as a trend that is expected to continue.<sup>172</sup> The ability to influence people through CMC exists not only in jihadi networks and with Islamic extremists, but also with other agenda-driven producers.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Klaus Mainzer, “Causality in Natural, Technical, and Social Systems,” *European Review* 18, no. 4 (2010): 433-454, doi:10.1017/S1062798710000244.

<sup>170</sup> UK Secretary of State for the Home Department, “CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism” (July 2011), 63.

<sup>171</sup> Richard Scheines, “The Similarity of Causal Inference in Experimental and Non-experimental Studies,” *Philosophy of Science* 72, no. 5, Proceedings of the 2004 Biennial Meeting of The Philosophy of Science Association Part I, ed. Miriam Solomon (December 2005): 927–940, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/508950>.

<sup>172</sup> Steven H. Chaffee and Miriam J. Metzger, “The End of Mass Communication?” *Mass Communication & Society* 4, no. 4 (2001): 369.

<sup>173</sup> Chaffee and Metzger, “The End of Mass Communication,” 374–375.

The proponents of Internet radicalization assert that CMC exists and affects the group of radicalizing factors in such a manner as to drive the outcome. This assumption is faulty at the outset without having to prove causation to refute it. The outcome and the presence of CMC with all of the conventional radicalization factors are being used to prove the CMC caused the outcome. Radicalization existed prior to the creation of the Internet and CMC; therefore, it can be safely concluded that CMC is not necessary for radicalization. Hence, it cannot be a critical component or a necessary component to radicalize people in terms of pure logic. Karl Popper's refutation of induction by finding correct errors applies to this example. To determine the validity of a thesis, it is not enough to show the existence of data to support the thesis, but to determine what evidence would disprove the thesis and whether that evidence can be observed.<sup>174</sup> The fact that radicalization existed prior to CMC and the fact that radicalization continues without CMC weakens the assertion that CMC causes radicalization. Again, all that can be determined is the mere correlation that some people that access CMC become radicals and that CMC has some value to those that become radicals.

The issue, however, is whether the addition of CMC to existing radicalization factors has such an effect that radicalization is more likely to occur with CMC than without it. The dilemma in discerning whether Internet radicalization exists as a threat is how to determine whether CMC is the influential variable driving the change from conventional worldview to extremist worldview. This logic problem requires distinguishing whether the CMC is a controlling variable among the other factors, an initiating factor for a sequence of events, or a catalyst. This evaluation falls short of using the terminology of causation philosophy, but may suit the purpose in understanding the dynamics of the complex radicalization process when CMC is applied.<sup>175</sup> Causation becomes less relevant, but correlation is important. Correlation can support the comprehension of the threat of Internet radicalization if CMC influences the negative

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<sup>174</sup> Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (New York, Random House: 2010); Stephan Thornton, "Karl Popper," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, November 13, 1997, revised February 9, 2009, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/popper/>.

<sup>175</sup> Nancy Cartwright, "Causation: One Word, Many Things," *Philosophy of Science* 7 (December 2004): 805–819.

outcome—radicalization. Comprehension is regarded in terms of the sense that the correlation instills fear, not in the determinate essence of cause and effect.

Correlation must be evaluated to determine whether the comprehension of the threat is warranted. In this thesis, the same outcome—radicalization—is identified for processes involving CMC and those not involving CMC. Therefore, structuring a system to see whether the correlation between CMC, and the outcome, can help explain the significance of CMC in validating the comprehension of the threat of Internet radicalization. The relationships between the variables have been evaluated, not for linear process of causation, but for impact within the known sequence of events, disposition of the individual identified here as vulnerabilities, and the reasonable perceived weight of conventional communications in relation to CMC. This framework is outside the traditional causation models, but serves a purpose in identifying whether the threat should be taken as genuine and probable, or unusual and rare.

## **2. Categorization: Internet Radicalization-Support-Utility**

Radicalizing influences outside the cyber-realm exist, but the assumed persuasive impact of CMC promotes fear that a unique and powerful path to radicalization has been created, which facilitates the metamorphosis quicker, more frequently, and directly. For Internet radicalization to be considered valid, CMC does not need to be the sole radicalizing agent. CMC can bring about the radical change as a controlling variable, an initiating factor, or a catalyst. In all three, CMC facilitates radicalization through linking and joining a person to an extremist network or providing persuasive radicalizing content to a seeker of knowledge. To support classifying the outcome as Internet radicalization, CMC would appear at a significant point in the radicalization process, and provide influential information and contacts that the person would not have otherwise had. The CMC access correlates with the change. CMC that is not attributed to directly influencing radicalization can be categorized as support or utility to radicalized individuals and groups.

An example of support would be a radicalized person who associates with local extremists or attends venues where extremist content can be found and supplements those

resources with CMC accessed information, virtual contacts, and international political and religious conflicts. Utility would be radicalized individuals using CMC in the course of jihadist network business and in active recruiting. Utility includes obtaining instructional material from a website, arranging meetings, preparing and directing operation plans through both synchronous and asynchronous communication methods, and participating in recruitment efforts orchestrated by the network members. An example of utility would be jihadists creating and lurking in chat rooms or forums to identify vulnerable individuals for recruitment. The cases listed as non-Internet radicalization cases in the Appendix are included as examples of both support and utility.

These classifications have value because they enable scholars who study this area to distinguish between CMC influences on radicalization from CMC as a ubiquitous modern communication tool that extremists use in the same manner as everyone else. These classifications are relevant because studying the radicalization connection to CMC technology should not be all encompassing under an umbrella of “Internet radicalization,” but should focus on the specific components of radicalization and the particular impact CMC has on those components. The illusion of an “all-powerful Internet” changes from a rhetorical device that clouds reason and confounds analysis to a practical communication capability that intervenes, facilitates, or enhances radicalization dynamics that exist notwithstanding the existence of new communication technology. CMC ubiquity becomes a mechanical fact to contend with, rather than the cause of a threat that is still being studied for its root causes.

### **3. Specific Analysis with Categories**

#### *a. Internet Radicalization*

Analyzing the selected cases in regard to the variables discloses that the cases of Roshonara Choudhry, Colleen LaRose and Abdul Basheer Abdul Kader can be categorized as Internet radicalization. Choudhry sought out information about Islam, found extremist content, and swiftly acted with violence as an act of jihad. Similarly, Basheer led a successful life and after turning to the Internet for answers regarding Islam, and sought to wage jihad to attack perceived injustices to Muslims. The lack of

information regarding conventional communication for Choudhry and Basheer, and the absence of any apparent vulnerability prior to engaging with CMC, makes both cases the strongest examples of Internet radicalization in this study. Both express views consistent with relative deprivation, but each appears to come to that position after receiving online content transmitting the perceived plight of Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the duty for jihad to address the injustice. Further study of these cases may provide understanding of why Choudhry and Basheer moved from information seeker to jihadist, and uncover unknown vulnerabilities or influential conventional communications.

Information shows that LaRose may have been vulnerable to radicalization due to her mental health, but the fact that she is a Muslim convert, the lack of evidence of conventional communication with Islamic extremists, and her full use of Internet functionalities for instruction, inspiration, propaganda, support and operations, provides support to assert that CMC played a greater role in her worldview shift than conventional communication. Purveyors of radicalizing CMC content and the existing extremist network did, however, exploit her vulnerability, thus supporting some justification for fearing the accessibility of radical networks and content through Internet functionalities.

#### *b. Support*

The remaining six cases can be categorized as using CMC and Internet functionalities for support. All but two of the cases involved CMC being accessed in the self-identification stage. Hamaad Munshi engaged the Internet at the jihadization stage and Kaziu and Hadzovic at the indoctrination stage. Hamaad Munshi first began using Internet functionalities after his direct contact with Islamic militant Aabid Khan. Khan's influence cannot be absolutely determined, but factoring in the youth vulnerability when Munshi encountered him, the conservative family and his direct interest in explosives, it is reasonable to conclude that Munshi was radicalized outside of radicalizing CMC content, and had already become part of a network. Kaziu and Hadzovic's exposure to conventional communication regarding Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay likely inspired a shift in worldview, which was further supported by CMC content. They did not appear

to be information seekers stumbling on extremist views in their search for truth; rather, they appeared as enraged Muslims seeking to find ways to address injustice.

The case of Arid Uka is difficult to discern between Internet radicalization and support, but the contact between him and known extremist Rami Makanesi casts doubt that radicalization resulted solely or primarily from consumption of Internet content. The quick jump into the jihadist cyber-world—four to five weeks before killing U.S. servicemen without prior Internet presence—discounts classifying him as a seeker of information who found a new way of thinking from the content he encountered. The abrupt change seems to imply some catalyst pushing him to make the transition prior to appearing on the Internet. It appears that he jumped in seeking a supporting network. Therefore, categorizing the CMC impact and his usage of Internet functionalities as support better fits the facts than does Internet radicalization.

The remaining support cases contain evidence of radicalization prior to engaging radical CMC. Nicky Reilly's behavior after watching 9/11 videos, conversion to Islam, and conduct attributed to this family situation, mental health vulnerability and conventional communication at a mosque display a worldview shift. The Internet was used to feed his interests rather than create his interest. Mohammed Hassan Khalid's youth vulnerability, immigration from Pakistan, conventional communication prior to immigration and direct contact with extremist chat rooms tend to imply that he was radicalized prior to utilizing CMC. Khalid's recruitment can be directly attributed to CMC functionalities, but radicalization cannot be ascertained directly with the available information. Extensive integration within the jihadi cyber networks appears as a practical result of radicalization rather than a top-down pull to radicalize; hence, the support classification is appropriate.

Mohamed Osman Mohamud's contact with the unnamed Pakistani jihadist recruiter, which resulted in his efforts to join jihad in Afghanistan rather than Mohamud's Somali homeland, gives support to finding he was radicalized by conventional communication rather than radical CMC content. Mohamud authored articles for online jihadi publication *Jihad Recollections*, giving support to a contention that he was radicalized prior to establishing a web presence. As a participant in producing and

distributing propaganda, Mohamud took advantage of CMC and Internet functionalities doing the business of a jihadist. Therefore, his usage is not only for support, but also for utility.

*c. Utility*

Utility CMC usage is a catchall category for use that may or may not be consequential to a given goal, and is not distinguished from common usage employed by typical Internet users such as email communication. Some of the cases summarized in the Appendix provide broad examples of utility use. The fact that the cases were not analyzed completely under the thesis framework or through a rigorous review of the facts leaves the possibility that more information and study may disclose correlation to radicalization of the subjects. The cases have value to this thesis as illustration of the broad net that encompasses allusion of power given to Internet technology.

Sixteen of the twenty-five cases reviewed for inclusion in this study have been used as examples of the danger of the Internet in radicalization and recruitment. Eight cases were excluded from thesis analysis as either clearly resulting from conventional radicalization or due to insufficient evidence. The subjects' use of CMC in some way instigated writers to find that the cases were illustrations of the connection of Internet use and terrorism, or associated with the fear of Internet radicalization. The mere presence of Internet communication may not distinguish these cases as anything more than individuals using the Internet in the same manner as everyone else—utility usage.

Five of the sixteen cases involve groups of individuals planning or executing terror attacks, or joining jihad in a foreign nation. These cases were excluded from the thesis study because of the multiple members involved, but application of the framework to individual participants may determine what drove individual radicalization. In each case, CMC was alleged to have been used to further group goals. Individuals in these cases used CMC to communicate with each other and Islamic extremist networks. Three of the sixteen cases involve radicalized individuals using CMC and Internet functionalities to recruit new members to extremist networks or inspiring others to violent jihad. These three cases illustrate how utility use of CMC can further the goals of jihadi

operatives. As providers of content and tools of recruitment, the three operational cases support fear of communication technology due to the impact the few can have on many.

## V. CONCLUSION

The research question is whether radicalizing content provided through computer-mediated communication (CMC) creates a distinct threat of radicalization referred to as Internet radicalization. To answer this question, an analysis framework was constructed to review the radicalization causation elements and radicalization stages, and discern between computer-mediated and conventional communication types. The framework involved analyzing each case in terms of conventional communication, CMC and vulnerabilities that are defined with social psychology categories used to study radicalization. The analysis was further reviewed with radicalization stages as identified by staging behaviors. The framework provided a method to compare variables to each other and to a relative timeline to see first whether radicalization could be attributed outside of CMC, then to determine whether conventional communication or circumstances created a greater pressure to radicalize by weight of influence or sequence of contact or events. The framework provides a process of elimination for Internet radicalization rather than an absolute confirmation. Attributing radicalization to the Internet remains when other factors are excluded; however, due to incomplete evidence in the cases and the limits on methods in social science to determine causation, asserting an absolute cause is neither prudent nor supportable. The findings can merely state there are circumstances in some cases where a correlation can be found among the variables to attribute CMC to radicalization—identified as Internet radicalization. Since some circumstances involving CMC may increase the likelihood of radicalization, the fear of Internet radicalization may be reasonable. The number of incidents that validate that fear, however, make the threat unlikely and appear more as a phantom menace than a real threat.

This thesis examined twenty-five cases that popular opinion promotes as examples of Internet radicalization, or the radicalization threat that is produced by the power of Internet functionalities and CMC. Of these cases, sixteen were reviewed and excluded as Internet radicalization cases, either because radicalization can be clearly attributed to conventional communications or another cause, or that Internet

functionalities were used as a communication utility in the same manner that others may use the same capabilities. Of the nine cases remaining, three were found with variable correlations likely to establish radicalization caused by or attributed to CMC and six were found to have sufficient evidence to exclude CMC as causing radicalization. The analysis found that in the six non-Internet radicalization cases radicalization likely developed prior to using Internet functionalities and that Internet use supported and promoted the radical agenda, but was not a significant cause of radicalization.

The fact that three cases withstood the framework analysis makes it possible that Internet radicalization may exist, but other factors previously studied and affecting radicalization most likely have a greater impact on radicalization. Globalization is enhanced by the Internet, and brings distant conflicts to geographic locations where the conflict would not matter much. Information from the conflict can inspire group identification and instigate relative deprivation where ignorance would not.<sup>176</sup> <sup>177</sup> Therefore, CMC may merely provide an audience rather than a cause.

Roshonara Choudhry and Abdul Basheer Abdul Kader present the best examples of Internet radicalization. In each case, however, self-identification with their Islamic roots led to discovery of group conflicts they could identify with and act upon. Discovering their “muse” for jihad may not have occurred but for the Internet, but the root cause for their consternation and motivation actually exists—notwithstanding whether information is delivered to them by cyber means, television news, or mosque sermons. Radicalization through CMC may just be a modern derivative of traditional radicalization, but not distinct. The new technology may expand information flow and radical messages to a larger audience in a more influential manner, but the circumstances creating the news and forming the messages that change worldviews have not. The connection of new technology to the efficacy of broadly communicated radicalizing information and access to extremist networks only distinguishes Internet radicalization as a modern, convenient route for traditional radicalization rather than a new form of radicalization.

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<sup>176</sup> Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View*, 22–23.

<sup>177</sup> Moghaddam, *How Globalization Spurs Terrorism*, 49–51.

Colleen LaRose's case supports the theory of distinct Internet radicalization, but unlike Choudhry and Basheer, LaRose's vulnerability from personal problems and mental state more than likely drove her radicalization. The root cause stemming from her troubled psyche created susceptibility to radicalization. Radical CMC content and the jihadi network she joined provided an opportunity to develop interpersonal relationships building inclusion and value.<sup>178</sup>

This thesis has shown that a significant correlation between CMC and radicalization may exist to create incidents of Internet radicalization, but that the hype about it being pervasive is probably overstated. The number of cases that were reviewed reduced numerous allusions of Internet radicalization down to three likely cases where the CMC may have developed jihadists. The Internet is an efficient conduit of information and a linkage tool connecting like-minded people. Absent root causes creating vulnerability, however, the threat of Internet radicalization might only be the fear that someone—who we should already fear—turns the light switch on to enlighten themselves, or find partners who, until illuminated, were merely ghosts in the dark. The menace is in the phantoms we choose not to see, rather than the illumination that discloses the root cause issues that create the terror threat.

#### A. WHY THIS MATTERS AND WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT

The perception that Internet radicalization is an actual threat makes determining whether the threat is real, illusory or derivative important. If Internet radicalization does not exist, then efforts to counter extremist CMC or networking capabilities may be an unnecessary battle. Spending energy, money and time to formulate policy, strategies and tactics to counter the phantom threat diverts resources that may be better utilized addressing root causes. If the threat is illusory, then understanding the attribution of mystical power to Internet technology should be addressed through further study and strategies. Correcting misimpressions of enhanced efficacy through technological

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<sup>178</sup> Deborah Leiter and John Dowd, "Textual Expectations, (Dis)Embodiment, and Social Presence in CMC," in *Interpersonal Relations and Social Patterns in Communication Technologies: Discourse Norms, Language Structures and Cultural Variables*, ed. Jung-ran Park and Eileen Abels (Vancouver, IG Global, 2010), 32-47, doi: 10.4018/978-1-61520-827-2.ch003.

advances can relieve the fear created by illusory power. Similarly, the fear of the CMC threat may be exaggerated by perceived impact on others. For example, a study determined that people perceived the negative impact of Internet pornography on others is greater than the perceived impact on themselves.<sup>179</sup> The same kind of projected threat and vulnerability may be applied to radical CMC. Therefore, the perceived fear of the radicalizing material could be studied to avoid policy decisions that address unfounded risks or misidentified vulnerabilities.

If Internet radicalization is derivative of typical radicalization such that it facilitates or accelerates radicalization, but does not cause it, then the proper attention should be given to address the root causes rather than the communication tool. Attacking the content and the ability to publish and transmit the content has U.S. Constitution First Amendment legal ramifications that are better avoided if radicalization can be addressed at its actual cause.<sup>180</sup>

National strategies identify radicalization through the Internet as a concern.<sup>181 182</sup> In August 2011, the White House issued a strategy to prevent violent extremism in the U.S.<sup>183</sup> and a strategy implementation plan in December 2011.<sup>184</sup> The White House strategy identifies countering online violent extremist propaganda as a priority<sup>185</sup> and the implementation plan commits the government to research and expand violent radicalization analysis into the role of the Internet and how to use the cyber realm for

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<sup>179</sup> Byoungkwan Lee and Ron Tamborini, “Third-Person Effect and Internet Pornography: The Influence of Collectivism and Internet Self-Efficacy,” *Journal of Communication* 55, no. 2 (2005): 292.

<sup>180</sup> Samuel J. Rascoff, “Establishing Official Islam? The Law and Strategy of Counter Radicalization,” *Stanford Law Review* 64, no. 1, 125–189.

<sup>181</sup> Homeland Security Council, *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, Washington, DC, October 2007, 15.

<sup>182</sup> Department of Homeland Security, *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review Report: A Strategic Framework for a Secure Homeland*, Washington, DC, February 2010.

<sup>183</sup> The White House, *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*, Washington, DC, August 2011.

<sup>184</sup> The White House, *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*, Washington, DC, December 2011.

<sup>185</sup> The White House, *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*, Washington, DC, August 2011, 6.

countermeasures.<sup>186</sup> As a component of the plan, the actual impact of CMC on radicalization must be studied in depth to separate the myth from reality. Merely asserting that the threat exists and building policies upon unsubstantiated belief can cost time and money that can be used to address the external, social, and individual causes of radicalization.<sup>187</sup> Marc Sageman summed up the approach that needs to be taken to address radicalization:

A successful strategy will disrupt the process of radicalization before it reaches its violent end.<sup>188</sup> It is indeed a contest for the hearts and minds of potential terrorists, not an intellectual debate about the legitimacy of an extreme interpretation of a religious message.<sup>189</sup> The Internet should become the battleground of this war of interpretation, hopes, dreams, and aspirations.<sup>190</sup>

This thesis has provided an analytical framework synthesizing sociological radicalization causation elements, psychological and social-psychological vulnerabilities, practical staging categorizations, and communication components. The fusion provided groupings into variables that could be examined in relation to each other to understand correlations and interactions. Future research can apply the same method to evaluate and synthesize the different disciplinary approaches employed by the social sciences to understand the impact of communication technology upon radicalization causes and interpretation of social conditions. Melding cross-disciplinary components to construct hybrid categories that can be evaluated within each discipline enables developing new perspectives and understanding. For example, in this thesis combining practical staging elements with objective behaviors in psychology provided insight that was absent in each independently.

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<sup>186</sup> The White House, *Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*, Washington, DC, December 2011, 12–13, 20.

<sup>187</sup> Mohamed Abdul Saddiq, “Whither e-jihad: Evaluating the Threat of Internet Radicalisation,” *RSIS Commentaries* (Singapore: Rajaratnam School of International Studies, July 27, 2010): 2, <http://hdl.handle.net/10220/6646>.

<sup>188</sup> Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad*, 151.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 160.

Further research needs to be undertaken to understand susceptibility to radicalization and the whether chance encounters facilitated by new communications technologies increase significant life changes.<sup>191</sup> Deconstructing vulnerability to distinguish between gullibility, susceptibility, and impaired discernment should be explored to further understand the impact of unconventional thought. One of the fears of the Internet is the impact of unintended reception of objectionable content or interaction with predators. Search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo facilitate targeted searches for information, but inadvertently encountering harmful material is a possibility. Therefore, understanding correlations between vulnerability and chance encounters may help determine whether the risk of life change is substantial or questionable.

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<sup>191</sup> Albert Bandura, “The Psychology of Chance Encounters and Life Paths,” *American Psychologist* 37, no. 7 (July 1982): 747-755; Albert Bandura, “Exploration of Fortuitous Determinants of Life Paths,” *Psychological Inquiry* 9, no. 2 (1998): 95–115.

## **APPENDIX. CASES FREQUENTLY CITED AS EXAMPLES OF INTERNET RADICALIZATION AND RECRUITMENT, BUT CMC IS USED FOR UTILITY OR SUPPORT RATHER THAN FOR INTERNET RADICALIZATION**

The cases summarized in this Appendix are frequently cited as examples of the threat that the Internet plays in terrorism, radicalization and recruitment. The cases were excluded from thesis analysis because they involved numerous people; the principal individuals were obviously radicalized prior to utilizing CMC, or the radical operatives utilized the Internet to further an existing extremist agenda. The cases are separated into three categories to simplify review: cases involving groups, operative cases, clearly conventional radicalization cases, and insufficient information cases.

### **A. CASES INVOLVING GROUPS**

#### **1. London Transportation Bomb Plot of July 21, 2005**

Four African men were arrested for attempting to bomb the London Transportation system on July 21, 2005. Al Qaeda operative Rashid Rauf directly recruited the four men—Muktar Said Ibrahim, Yassin Omar, Ramzi Mohammed and Hussain Osman.<sup>192</sup> Ibrahim was the leader of the group and the only one of the men to travel to Pakistan for terror training. Three articles use this case as an example of the Internet radicalization threat.<sup>193</sup> The articles point out that plotter Hussein Osman told investigators that he and his group regularly watched Internet videos about Iraq and used the Internet to learn about jihad. Osman was said to have stated that his group would watch films, “especially those in which you saw women and children killed and

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<sup>192</sup> Nic Robertson, Paul Cruickshank and Tim Lister, “Documents Give New Details on al Qaeda’s London Bombings,” *CNN World*, April 30, 2012, [http://articles.cnn.com/2012-04-30/world/world\\_al-qaeda-documents-london-bombings\\_1\\_qaeda-s-london-operation-crevice-rashid-rauf?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://articles.cnn.com/2012-04-30/world/world_al-qaeda-documents-london-bombings_1_qaeda-s-london-operation-crevice-rashid-rauf?_s=PM:WORLD).

<sup>193</sup> Awan, “Radicalization on the Internet?” 76-81; Adam Birmingham, Maura Conway, Lisa McInerney, Neil O’Hare, Alan F. Smeaton, “Combining Social Network Analysis and Sentiment Analysis to Explore the Potential for Online Radicalisation,” *Advances in Social Network Analysis and Mining*, IEEE Computer Society (2009), 231, doi:10.1109/ASONAM.209.31; Institute for Strategic Dialogue, Policy Planners Network, “Radicalisation: The Role of the Internet A Working Paper of the PPN,” June 2011, 2. Also see, Maura Conway, “From al-Zarqawi to al-Awlaki: The Emergence of the Internet as a New Form of Violent Radical Milieu,” International School on Disarmament and Research on Conflicts, n.d., [http://www.isodarco.it/courses/andalo12/doc/Zarqawi%20to%20Awlaki\\_V2.pdf](http://www.isodarco.it/courses/andalo12/doc/Zarqawi%20to%20Awlaki_V2.pdf).

exterminated by the English and American soldiers, or widows, mothers and daughters who were crying.”<sup>194</sup> The extremist multi-media content was delivered by Internet websites. The content displaying the plight of Iraqi Muslims may have instilled a perceived injustice resulting in relative deprivation. The fact that the men attended the Finsbury Park Mosque where radical cleric Abu Hamza al-Masri preached has significant weight in determining whether the Internet would have caused their radicalization. Radicalization likely preceded CMC usage. CMC played both a support and utility role in this case. Support in confirming the radical ideas promoted at the mosque and utility in providing communication capabilities between the conspirators.

## **2. Canadian Bomb Plot aka Toronto 18 Plot**

A group of Muslim men planned to explode trucks at various locations in downtown Toronto.<sup>195</sup> Three sources cite this case as an example of Internet radicalization.<sup>196</sup> Plotting started in chat rooms in 2004.<sup>197</sup> Fourteen adults and four youths were arrested. Two Americans from Atlanta, Georgia, contacted the Toronto group by chat and email and travelled to Toronto in March 2005 to meet them.<sup>198</sup> The Toronto group also established communication links to the Aabid Khan jihadi group in London through email and chat rooms.<sup>199</sup> Internet functionalities were used for education and interaction with others with similar viewpoints. The group had contact with each other through elementary school and supported each other in the slide to extremism before they used CMC. The group used Internet chat rooms, email, forums, website videos and web-provided training material. Fahim Ahmad led and influenced the

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<sup>194</sup> Francis Elliot, Sophie Goodchild and John Phillips, “Extraordinary Admission to Interrogators by London Bomb Suspect,” *The Independent*, July 31, 2005, Lexis/Nexis Academic.

<sup>195</sup> “Toronto 18: Key Events in the Case,” *CBC News*, June 2, 2008, Updated March 4, 2011, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2008/06/02/f-toronto-timeline.html>.

<sup>196</sup> Awan, “Radicalization on the Internet?” 78; Alexander, “Offline and Online Radicalization”; Sajian M. Gohel, “The Internet and Its Role in Terrorist Recruitment and Operational Planning,” *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 12 (December 2009): 12.

<sup>197</sup> Nicolaas van Rijin, “Plot Began in Chat Room,” *Toronto Star*, June 5, 2006, Lexis/Nexis Academic.

<sup>198</sup> Ben Smith, “Atlanta Terror Trial Tied to Toronto 18; U.S. Prosecutors Say Would-Be Jihadists Offered Advice Here,” *Toronto Star*, June 2, 2009, Lexis/Nexis Academic.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

Toronto group through direct contact and provided the group al-Awlaki jihadi videos on a laptop.<sup>200</sup> Information regarding the overseas Muslim situation was received from a combination of experience, verbal communication and through CMC. The known facts make attributing radicalization to external, internal and individual factors reasonable. Psychiatric reports about Zakaria Amara, who converted from Orthodox Christian to Islam around the time he turned ten years old, show that his conversion may have been a result of reactive opposition to his strained family life.<sup>201</sup> Relative deprivation appears to motivate the group to action. Attributing radicalization to CMC is not possible in this case. The group used CMC extensively to further their plans and interact with an international network as a utility and used the content for support, but the impetus for radicalizing cannot be distinguished between conventional contact and CMC.

### **3. Shirwa Ahmed and Somali Youth Radicalization**

Shirwa Ahmed was a naturalized Somali who left the U.S. to become the first U.S. resident suicide bomber on October 29, 2008.<sup>202</sup> It is thought that he radicalized within the U.S. and that the Internet facilitated his change. Friends noticed he started to become more religious as early as 2002.<sup>203</sup> Bruce Hoffman and FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III define his case as homegrown terror recruitment.<sup>204</sup> The high unemployment and tough integration into the U.S. culture have been attributed to the Somali radicalization. These root causes have been identified in European diaspora communities, but were not found in the U.S. until the Somali youth radicalization.<sup>205</sup> The

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<sup>200</sup> “Toronto 18: An Exclusive Account of How Canada’s First Homegrown Terror Cell was Created, Who Followed the Trials More Closely and Continuously Than any other Journalist, Montiorin 1,200 hours of Court Proceedings in a Case Involving 82,200 Electronic Intercepts and 700 Officers,” *The Toronto Star*, July 3-4, 2010, Lexis/Nexis Academic.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> “Shirwa Ahmed,” *Global Jihad.net*, Updated December 3, 2009, [http://www.globaljihad.net/view\\_page.asp?id=1426](http://www.globaljihad.net/view_page.asp?id=1426).

<sup>203</sup> “Shirwa’s Journey,” *Star Tribune*, Updated May 6, 2009, <http://www.startribune.com/local/north/44231802.html>.

<sup>204</sup> Spencer S. Hsu and Carrie Johnson, “Somali Americans Recruited by Extremists,” *Washington Post*, March 11, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/10/AR2009031003901.html>.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

radicalization of Shirwa Ahmed and the other Somali youths was likely instigated by a handful of men who arrived in Minneapolis in late 2007 after traveling to Somalia to fight with the Islamist movement there.<sup>206</sup> Al Shabab released videos portraying Somalia's struggle to defend Islam and establish an Islamic state. Many of the Somali youth viewed violent videos in a youth center computer lab.<sup>207</sup> These videos, received through the Internet, enflamed the Somali youth who had viewed their homeland's problems as a fight against the Ethiopian enemy occupation.<sup>208</sup> The external threat established a group identity that the youths could join. Group identification dynamics likely drove radicalization with relative deprivation denying the group justice. CMC brought radicalizing political and religious information to them to validate their change to jihadists. Another Somali youth, Mohamoud Hassan, became more religious and interested in the Somali homeland; in 2007, he began downloading sermons onto his iPod and searching the Internet for jihadist videos, chat rooms and sermons by Anwar al-Awlaki.<sup>209</sup> Despite the Internet functionalities accessed for information, individuals at the Abubakar mosque and an older adult who purchased airline tickets for the youths had personal contact with them and were likely more persuasive in changing their worldview than the videos alone. Context for the Ethiopian-Somali conflict provided by the local religious leaders enhanced whatever impact the Internet videos and sermons provided. To be noted, the inspiration for radicalization seems tied to the rape of Somali women.

#### **4. Ramy Zamzam Group**

A group of five men in their twenties—Waqar Hussain Khan, Omar Farooq, Ahmed Abdullah Minni, Ramy S. Zamzam and Iman Hassan Yemer—traveled from the

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<sup>206</sup> Andrea Elliot, "A Call to Jihad, Answered in America," *New York Times*, July 12, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/us/12somalis.html?pagewanted=all>.

<sup>207</sup> Sen. Comm. on Homeland Security and Gov. Affairs., *Zachary Chesson: A Case Study in Online Islamist Radicalization and Its Meaning for the Threat of Homegrown Terrorism*, Washington D.C.: February 2012, 2. Quoting statement of Abdirahman Mukhtar, in Before the Sen. Comm. on Homeland Security and Gov. Affairs, *Violent Islamist Extremism: Al-Shabaab Recruitment in America* (March 11, 2009).

<sup>208</sup> Andrea Elliot, "A Call to Jihad."

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

United States to Pakistan to fight jihad against U.S. troops in Afghanistan.<sup>210</sup> Two are of Pakistani origin, one Egyptian, one is of Ethiopian descent and another is of Eritrean background. Zamzam is the son of Egyptian Muslim immigrants from a not especially religious family. The neighborhood mosque the group attended had a club atmosphere for the youths.<sup>211</sup> It is uncertain whether the five displayed any outward signs of radicalization. The only item that gave such indication is Zamzam's farewell message video referencing world events, and that that Muslims must do something about evidence of relative deprivation.<sup>212</sup>

The group frequently watched YouTube videos and left comments praising Taliban attacks. Active participation within the virtual communities distinguished the individuals, and their comments caught the attention of a Pakistani militant who recruited them to come to Pakistan. The group made contact with al Qaeda affiliates through the Internet and used email to leave coded messages.<sup>213</sup> All are Muslims in this case illustrate a top-down recruitment of radical individuals who are identified by Internet use. Radicalization is unclear in this case. CMC is used to obtain information and participate in virtual communities. Why the individuals radicalized is not evident, and attributing CMC as the primary radicalizing agent without further information cannot be substantiated. All have been convicted in Pakistan for terror-related charges.

## **5. Madrid Bombing**

The March 11, 2004, Madrid train bombings were perpetrated by an al-Qaeda-inspired group intending to use the bombings to influence the upcoming elections in

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<sup>210</sup> “Terror Recruiters Use Internet to Search for Radicals,” *Indian Express*, December 14, 2009, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/terror-recruiters-use-internet-to-search-for-radicals/553728/>.

<sup>211</sup> Scott Shane, “A Thanksgiving Meal, Then Charges of Jihad: A Mother’s Tale,” *New York Times*, April 17, 2010, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/18/world/asia/18mother.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/18/world/asia/18mother.html?_r=1).

<sup>212</sup> “5 Americans Probed for Terror Links,” *msnbc.msn.com*, updated December 9, 2009, [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34346329/ns/world\\_news-south\\_and\\_central\\_asia/t/americans-probed-terror-links/#.UASaQI518Ux](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34346329/ns/world_news-south_and_central_asia/t/americans-probed-terror-links/#.UASaQI518Ux).

<sup>213</sup> Joan Neuhaus Schaan and Jessica Phillips, “Analyzing the Islamic Extremist Phenomenon in the United States: A Study of Recent Activity,” James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy Rice University, November 7, 2011, 25. <http://bakerinstitute.org/publications/SEC-pub-USIslamicExtremist110411.pdf>.

Spain and force Spain to withdraw from Iraq. Dr. Fernando Reinares<sup>214</sup> and Akil Awan<sup>215</sup> have attributed the Internet to be a tool used in conjunction with face-to-face interaction as instrumental in the Madrid bombing case. The attribution of Internet radicalization to this case is limited. Terror groups utilized Internet websites to present information to encourage bombing trains to compel Spain to withdraw from Iraq. CMC was used to motivate action to change an external circumstance. The worldview of the target audience appears to be assumed, and the utility is to motivate and perhaps recruit action by radicalized Muslims rather than inspire individual worldview change. CMC was provided to those with a predisposition to extremism.

## B. OPERATIVE CASES

### 1. Aabid Hussein Khan:

Aabid Hussein Khan founded a terrorist cell at the age of twenty-two. Khan has been presented as an example of self-radicalization because he sought out and consumed mujahedeen and jihadist information available on the Internet as early as age twelve.<sup>216</sup> He became a critical node in an extremist network with members in the UK, U.S. and Canada.<sup>217</sup> Khan actively recruited young people to join the jihadi movement and arranged travel to Pakistan for terrorist training.<sup>218</sup> Khan met and likely influenced Hamaad Munshi at a mosque in Dewsbury, UK. Khan admitted to being an orthodox Muslim with strong religious beliefs. His travel to Pakistan as a pre-teen and teenager may have influenced his following violent jihad.<sup>219</sup> When viewing Internet-accessible material, Khan stated, “I felt upset and angry at the onslaught against innocent women

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<sup>214</sup> Fernando Reinares, “Jihadist Radicalization and the 2004 Madrid Bombing Network,” *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 11 (November 2009): 16.

<sup>215</sup> Awan, “Radicalization on the Internet?” 76-81.

<sup>216</sup> Homeland Security Institute, “The Internet as a Terrorist Tool for Recruitment and Radicalization of Youth,” 6.

<sup>217</sup> Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “Radicalisation: The Role of the Internet,” 2.

<sup>218</sup> Evan F. Kohlmann, “Anatomy of a Modern Homegrown Terror Cell: Aabid Khan et al.,” *The NEFA Foundation*, September 2008, 2, <http://www.nefafoundation.org/file/nefaaabidkhan0908.pdf>.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

and children by countries such as Russia.”<sup>220</sup> This statement frames his radicalization within relative deprivation theory. His age might provide dispositional susceptibility to radical persuasion. The claim that he is self-radicalized is a stretch since his contacts in Pakistan at an early age and contact with extremist views at the Drewsbury mosque does not isolate him. The jihadist ideology surrounded him. Had he been a Christian without real-life Muslim connections, an argument for self-radicalization might be more persuasive. Here it is not. The impact of the radicalizing Internet content may make this a case for Internet radicalization if the other Islamic contact is completely moderate. Aabid Khan can justifiably be called an important contributor to the violent jihadi web presence and attributed with having an impact on those viewing the material, but asserting him as an example of Internet radicalization is not supported.

## **2. Younes Tsouli aka Irhabi007:**

Younes Tsouli, along with Waseem Mughal and Tariq Al-Daour, operated websites and online forums and created and posted online literature and videos in support of jihad.<sup>221</sup> In early 2004, Tsouli joined a number of popular web forums and quickly became known by his cyber name of Irhabi007. Tsouli’s work included downloading videos, posting email messages, and chatting on web forums. He did not have prior involvement in extremist groups, but as a result of his Internet activities, he was joined by “others online to create a ‘virtual’ terrorist cell.”<sup>222</sup> Tsouli’s Internet activities were the result of his existing extremist worldview. It cannot be said that the Internet caused his worldview to change. His computer expertise was used by al Qaeda and is an example of implementing al Qaeda’s Internet communication strategy. He is a good illustration of exploiting CMC capabilities to radicalize and recruit.

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<sup>220</sup> Evan F. Kohlmann, “Anatomy of a Modern Homegrown Terror Cell: Aabid Khan et al.,” *The NEFA Foundation*, September 2008, 2, <http://www.nefafoundation.org/file/nefaaabidkhan0908.pdf>.

<sup>221</sup> Alexander, “Offline and Online Radicalization.”

<sup>222</sup> Institute for Strategic Dialogue, “Radicalisation: The Role of the Internet,” 2.

### **3. Jesse Curtis Morton aka Younis Abdullah Muhammed**

Morton is a Muslim convert committed to follow the teachings of radical Muslim cleric Sheikh Abdullah Faisal.<sup>223</sup> He founded *Revolution Muslim* website in December 2007 and published radical content encouraging violent jihad by terrorizing disbelievers of Islam.<sup>224</sup> <sup>225</sup> Morton also advocated violence against *South Park* cartoon creators for creating an episode with the prophet Muhammad in a bear suit. He was arrested and pled guilty to making threats against the *South Park* creators. Morton worked with Zachary Chesser in posting the online threats to the *South Park* creators. His site also published the al-Qaeda *Inspire* magazine and called for violence against the cartoonist who proposed an “Everybody Draw Muhammad Day.” Investigation reveals insufficient information to determine his progress to radicalization. The impact of his website, however, is the kind of information that is objected to as radicalizing.

## **C. CLEARLY CONVENTIONAL RADICALIZATION CASES**

### **1. Rajim Karim**

Rajim Karim is a British Airways employee who used his position to pass on sensitive information to Islamist extremists and planned on finding a way to crash British Airways computer systems to cause chaos to international travel.<sup>226</sup> He made contact with Anwar al-Awlaki via the Internet. Karim is Bangladeshi, upper class and college educated. Karim was radicalized with his brother, Tehzeeb. The brothers supported Jammat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh, an organization that desires to establish an Islamic state.<sup>227</sup> Support for Jammat-ul-Mujahideen implies their radical views existed

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<sup>223</sup> U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, United States of America v Jesse Curtis Morton, Statement of Facts February 9, 2012.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> U.S. Attorney’s Office, Eastern District of Virginia, Press Release, “Leader of Revolution Muslim Pleads Guilty to Using Internet to Solicit Murder and Encourage Violent Extremism,” February 9, 2012, <http://www.justice.gov/usao/vae/news/2012/02/201209mortonnr.html>.

<sup>226</sup> “Terror Plot BA Man Rajib Karim Gets 30 Years,” *bbc.co.uk*, March 18, 2011, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12788224>.

<sup>227</sup> Raffaello Pantucci, “Al-Awlaki Recruits Bangladeshi Militants for Strike on the United States,” *Terrorism Monitor* 9, no. 7 (February 17, 2011): 3. [http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/TM\\_009\\_7.pdf](http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/TM_009_7.pdf).

independent of the Internet usage. It appears their extremist worldview drove them to seek out personal contact with al-Awlaki. Tehzeeb traveled to Yemen and made direct contact with al-Awlaki. Rajim moved from Bangladesh to the UK for health care for his child. To the public, Rajim painted himself as a liberal Muslim rather than an Islamist.<sup>228</sup> Rajim contacted al-Awlaki through email and likely viewed online video sermons of al-Awlaki. Terrorism planning between al-Awlaki and Tehzeeb was accomplished via email. The brothers' association with Jammat-ul-Mujahideen in Bangladesh leads to a reasonable conclusion that radicalization came as a result of personal experience with the external political dynamics in Bangladesh rather than through CMC.

## **2. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab**

Nigerian Abdulmutallab attempted to detonate an explosive device sown into his underwear on an airplane headed to Detroit, Michigan, on Christmas Day 2009. He is commonly referred to as the “Underwear Bomber.” Prior to this incident, he was known to be a devout Muslim, and classmates at his boarding school referred to him as “Pope.”<sup>229</sup> He posted numerous messages online on an Islamic Forum website under the name of “farouk1986.”<sup>230</sup> As early as 2005, Abdulmutallab posted information describing inner conflict between his desires, his family relationships, and his devotion to Islam.<sup>231</sup> He attended school in the UK where he was the president of the University College London’s Islamic Society. While in that position, he employed speakers who preached radical messages. It is believed he was radicalized while in London.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Steve Swann, “Rajib Karim: The Terrorist Inside British Airways,” *bbc.co.uk*, February 28, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12573824>.

<sup>229</sup> Dan McDougall et al., “The Journey to Jihad: A Former Student, Inspired by Radical Clerics, Slipped Through the Intelligence Net to Launch a Suicide Mission that Nearly Brought Carnage to America,” *The Sunday Times (London)*, January 3, 2010, LexisNexis Academic.

<sup>230</sup> Philip Rucker and Julie Tate, “In Online Posts Apparently by Detroit Suspect, Religious Ideals Collide,” *Washington Post*, December 29, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/12/28/AR2009122802492.html>.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ali Shehzad, “Home-Grown Terror in Europe: Threat in the Mideast,” *Pakistan Journal of European Studies*, December 31, 2011, LexisNexis Academic.

Abdulmutallab's history shows his personal contact in London, Yemen and Nigeria likely influenced his worldview. Therefore, his case cannot be considered Internet radicalization.

### **3. Carlos Bledsoe aka Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad**

This case does not have factors that would tend to show Internet radicalization, but does illustrate a homegrown jihadist threat. In a psychiatrist's evaluation after his arrest, Bledsoe stated that he smoked cannabis and drank alcohol to intoxication during his teens and early college years, and was a gang member.<sup>233</sup> Bledsoe explored Judaism before converting to Islam at a Memphis mosque in 2004. He changed his name to Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad in 2007, and in the same year traveled to Yemen to learn more about Islam.<sup>234</sup> The Internet, however, did not play a large part in his conversion to Islam nor to his change to a jihadist.<sup>235</sup> While in Yemen, he was imprisoned, and the experience there likely contributed to his radicalization.

### **4. Faisal Shahzad**

Pakistani immigrant Faisal Shahzad, naturalized to U.S. citizenship on April 17, 2009, attempted to detonate an explosive-laden SUV in the middle of New York City's Times Square on May 1, 2010. Musa and Bendett cite his case as an example of where radicalization occurred without an enabling leader and was likely is the result of the information he received on the Internet.<sup>236</sup> This conclusion is not supported by information obtained about Shahzad's background. Shahzad lived in Pakistan during the state-sponsored jihad against India over the Kashmir region and studied in a school located on a military base that taught a curriculum with an anti-Western slant and strict

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<sup>233</sup> Kristina Goetz, "Memphian Drifted to Dark Side of Islamic Extremism, Plotted One-man Jihad vs. Homeland," *commercialappeal.com*, November 14, 2010, <http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2010/nov/14/memphis-man-plots-jihad-against-homeland/>.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Kristina Goetz, "Muslim Who Shot Soldier in Arkansas Says He Wanted to Cause More Death," *knoxnews.com*, November 13, 2010, <http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2010/nov/13/muslim-who-shot-soldier-arkansas-says-he-wanted-ca/>.

<sup>236</sup> Samuel Musa and Samuel Bendett, "Islamic Radicalization in the United States: New Trends and a Proposed Methodology for Disruption," Center for Technology and National Security Policy, National Defense University, September 2010, 11.

Islamic studies.<sup>237</sup> While watching the 9/11 attacks, he was reported to state to a friend, “They had it coming,” referring to the U.S.<sup>238</sup> After he married and his wife became pregnant, Shahzad became more religious and expressed anger toward President George W. Bush and the war in Iraq.<sup>239</sup> He also began to espouse the views of puritanical fourteenth-century scholar Ibn Taymyyah, and founder of Jamaat-e-Islami, Abdul Ala Mawdudi<sup>240</sup>. Shahzad received bomb-making training in North Waziristan in 2009 and met with Pakistani Taliban there. An email from Shahzad to friends, dated February 25, 2006, displays Shahzad’s frustration with his perceived injustice to Muslims, his distaste for human laws and governments, and concern for the Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and Chechnya.<sup>241</sup> The worldview developed by Shahzad appears to have resulted from his exposure to extremist Islam early in his life and filtering world events through that framework. Claiming that he was radicalized through the Internet is an overstatement and the fact that he stated he was inspired by al-Awlaki’s writings is used to support arguments about the influence of al-Awlaki and the ability of extremists to contact Muslims within the United States rather than the radicalization of Shahzad.<sup>242</sup> The actions by the Pakistani government in connection with the Times Square case support the contention that Shahzad worked directly with the Pakistani Taliban and Jaish-e-Muhammad, and even met with one in the U.S. two months prior to the attack.<sup>243 244</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Andrea Elliott, Sabrina Tavernise, and Anne Barnard, “For Times Square Suspect, Long Roots of Discontent,” *New York Times*, May 15, 2010, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/16/nyregion/16suspect.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/16/nyregion/16suspect.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all).

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Email from Faisal Shahzad to his friends, posted by the *New York Times* at <http://documents.nytimes.com/e-mail-from-faisal-shahzad>.

<sup>242</sup> Yochi J. Dreazen and Evan Perez, “Suspect Cites Radical Imam’s Writings,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 6, 2010, [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704370704575228150116907566.html?mod=WSJ\\_latestheadlines](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704370704575228150116907566.html?mod=WSJ_latestheadlines).

<sup>243</sup> William K. Rashbaum and Sabrina Tavernise, “Car Bomb Suspect Says He Trained in Pakistan,” *Boston.com*, May 5, 2010, [http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2010/05/05/car\\_bombing\\_suspect\\_says\\_he\\_was\\_trained\\_in\\_pakistan/?page=1](http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2010/05/05/car_bombing_suspect_says_he_was_trained_in_pakistan/?page=1).

<sup>244</sup> Mark Mazzetti, Sabrina Tavernise and Jack Healy, “Terrorism Suspect, Charged, Admits to Role in Bomb Plot,” *New York Times*, May 5, 2010, LexisNexis Academic.

## 5. Nidal Hasan

On November 5, 2009, U.S. Army psychiatrist Major Nidal Hasan opened fire with two handguns on Fort Hood, killing thirteen people and wounded twenty-nine others. The press and others have focused attention on the fact that Hasan communicated with Anwar al-Awlaki by email and questions have arisen whether he was self-radicalized through use of this Internet.<sup>245</sup> <sup>246</sup> Hasan's radicalization has also been attributed to three major factors in his life: the death of his mother in 2001, movement toward conservative Islam after her death, and his close professional contact with soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan where he heard stories about the war.<sup>247</sup> After his mother's death, Hasan attended the Dar al-Hijrah mosque when Anwar al-Awlaki was the imam. What contact Hasan had with al-Awlaki during his attendance at Dar al-Hijrah is not known. Co-workers observed Hasan's extremist views as early as 2003.<sup>248</sup> Hasan's required medical residency presentations included material openly questioning whether the army should allow Muslims to be conscientious objectors. One presentation from June 2007, "The Koranic World View As It Relates to Muslims in the U.S. Military," included slides pointing out, "It's getting harder and harder for Muslims in the service to morally justify being in a military that seems constantly engaged against fellow Muslims."<sup>249</sup> The presentation further provided information about Islam, quoting the Quran, and provides evidence of Hasan's conservative, if not extremist, leanings prior to Internet contact with al-Awlaki. The Internet contact between Hasan and al-Awlaki started when Hasan visited Anwar al-Awlaki's website on December 17, 2008, and sent a

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<sup>245</sup> Spencer S. Hsu, "Hasan's Ties to Radical Imam Raise Questions of 'Self-Radicalization,'" *Washington Post*, November 18, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/17/AR2009111703830.html>.

<sup>246</sup> Scott Shane and James Dao, "Investigators Study Tangle of Clues on Fort Hood Suspect," *New York Times*, November 14, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/15/us/15hasan.html?pagewanted=all>.

<sup>247</sup> Clint Watts, "Major Nidal Hasan and the Ft. Hood Tragedy: Implications for the U.S. Armed Forces," *Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, June 2011, <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/201106.watts.forthood.html>.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Dana Priest, "Fort Hood Suspect Warned of Threat Within Ranks," *Washington Post*, November 10, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/gallery/2009/11/10/GA2009111000920.html?sid=ST2009110903704>.

message. He followed up with at least fifteen more messages with the final message to al-Awlaki on June 16, 2009.<sup>250</sup> Hasan’s radicalization, while it can be classified as homegrown since there is no record of him leaving the country, should not be characterized as “Internet radicalization” despite his seeking counsel from al-Awlaki. His extremist worldview does not appear to originate from CMC, but from his life situation and existing devout beliefs. The information found nothing to indicate that al-Awlaki recruited or directed specific actions of Hasan, but only inspirational information consistent with the viewpoint already held by Hasan.

## D. INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION CASES

### 1. Abdul Benbrika

The Australian Benbrika group downloaded, collated and distributed extremist material, including videos of hostage beheadings and documents entitled *The Terrorist’s Handbook* and *White Resistance Manual* that contained recipes for the manufacture of explosives. This case does not fit the radicalization criteria. Nothing can be found in the research documents to disclose when Benbrika was radicalized. The World Almanac of Islamism reports:

Benbrika himself, however, appears to have had no sustained contact with global terrorist organizations. The only encounter on the public record was in 1994, when the British-based al-Qaeda sheikh Abu Qatadah visited Australia as a guest of the Melbourne-based Salafi imam Mohamed Omran. News reports suggest Benbrika’s radicalization can be traced to his exposure to Abu Qatadah’s speeches during that tour.<sup>251</sup>

The fact that Benbrika’s group utilized the Internet to obtain extremist material and broadcast it through CMC does not offer enough information to attribute CMC to radicalization. CMC is used as a tool to further the group’s goals, giving support and implemented as a utility.

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<sup>250</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigations, “The Final Report of the William H. Webster Commission on the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Counterterrorism Intelligence, and the Events at Fort Hood, Texas, on November 5, 2009,” July 19, 2012, <http://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/final-report-of-the-william-h.-webster-commission>.

<sup>251</sup> “Australia,” World Almanac of Islamism, *alamanac.afpc.org*, updated July 14, 2011, <http://almanac.afpc.org/Australia>.

## **2. Naser Jason Abdo**

A federal jury convicted Naser Jason Abdo of one count of attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction; one count of attempted murder of officers or employees of the United States; two counts of possession of a firearm in furtherance of a federal crime of violence; and two counts of possession of a destructive device in furtherance of a federal crime of violence for a July 2011 bomb plot in Killeen, Texas.<sup>252</sup> Abdo planned to blow up a local restaurant where military personnel frequently met. Other than the fact that he was found with a copy of “How to Build a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom” from the *Inspire* web magazine, there is nothing found that can attribute his radicalization to CMC. Reports disclose that he found the U.S. military action that was killing Muslims objectionable and that the proper response is for Muslims everywhere to do what they could to stop the killing. This external condition and in-group/out-group dynamics may be implied in this radicalization scheme.

## **3. Emerson Begolly**

American-born Pennsylvania State University student Begolly, aka Asadullah Alshishani, is a Nazi buff turned jihadi. He is a Muslim convert, and there are thoughts that Internet content radicalized him.<sup>253</sup> Begolly frequently posted on the Internet in the Ansar al-Mujahideen English Forum. The posts show him to hold radical Islamist beliefs. His Nazi beliefs were said to be inspired by his father.<sup>254</sup> Begolly’s mother states that he suffers from Asperger’s syndrome,<sup>255</sup> and his lawyer also claims he has Attention Deficit

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<sup>252</sup> U.S. Attorney’s Office, West District of Texas, Press Release, “Jury Convicts Naser Jason Abdo on All Counts in Connection with Texas Bomb Plot,” May 24, 2012.

<sup>253</sup> “Emerson Begolly: An American Jihadist,” *SITE Monitoring Service*, Posted December 22, 2010, <http://news.siteintellgroup.com/component/content/article/276-emerson-begolly-an-american-jihadist>.

<sup>254</sup> Hanna Siegel, “Nazi Buff Turned Jihadi Allegedly Bites FBI Agents,” *abcnews.go.com*, January 6, 2011, <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/nazi-buff-turned-jihadi-allegedly-bites-fbi-agents/story?id=12557232#.UAXYR4518Uw>.

<sup>255</sup> Rich Lord, “Online Statements, Arsenal of Weapons Keep Suspect in Jail,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.com*, January 14, 2012, updated July 3, 2012, <http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/local/region/online-statements-arsenal-of-weapons-keep-suspect-in-jail-281854/?p=2>.

Hyperactivity Disorder, but there is no evidence of a major mental illness.<sup>256</sup> He bit two FBI agents and was reaching for a loaded pistol as he was arrested on January 4, 2012. Other than the Nazi association, there is very little information regarding his radicalization.

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<sup>256</sup> Ryan J. Reilly, “Defense Alleges ‘Relationship’ Between Alleged Jihadist’s Mom and FBI Agent,” *TPM Media*, January 13, 2011, [http://tpmmuckraker.talkingpointsmemo.com/2011/01/defense\\_alleges\\_relationship\\_between\\_alleged\\_jihadists\\_mom\\_and\\_fbi\\_agent.php](http://tpmmuckraker.talkingpointsmemo.com/2011/01/defense_alleges_relationship_between_alleged_jihadists_mom_and_fbi_agent.php).

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